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RAJIV GANDHI

A Profile in Courage

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Architects of Swaraj
Vivekananda and Indian Renaissance
Shivaji and Indian Nationalism
Mother Teresa and Her Missionaries of Charity
Martyrdom of Indira Gandhi

RAJIV GANDHI

A Profile in Courage

B.K. AHLUWALIA
SHASHI AHLUWALIA

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To

Meenakshi, Shobhana & Rajesh

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Preface

When Rajiv was grounded three years back and brought into the political field, there was no indication that his apprenticeship would be so short. The hour came much earlier due to the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Rajiv Gandhi kept his private grief completely under control. His heart was bleeding for his dead mother but he dammed it, kept his composure and immediately stepped in to arrest the violence which erupted out in the capital and in other parts of the country. He struck to the schedule already drawn up for election and proved that his dedication to democratic concepts was second to none.

What is it that makes Rajiv Gandhi the ideal leader in this troubled times ? He has youth on his side. He is known as Mr. Clean. He has imbibed values from his grandfather Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and his mother Mrs. Indira Gandhi which carry the stamp of nationalism. He has the charisma which goes with the Nehru clan. He has a scientific temper, a bend for technological progress and the courage to push ahead with schemes which would remove poverty and backwardness from India. These are the qualities which make him a cut above the rest. He stands out like the beacon of hope.

There is an axiom 'If youth knew; if age could'. Luckily Rajiv Gandhi has the vibrant of youth and the maturity of age. He is neither too young nor too old. India can be optimistic of its future under his leadership.

The authors bring out the personality of Rajiv Gandhi with their usual balanced perception. They have collected all available facts about a man who, till recently, shied away from publicity. By their efforts the authors provide a peep into the mind and temper of the man who now guides India's destiny.

The authors are grateful to Prof. K. Swaminathan and Sarva Shri V. Narayanswamy, J.P. Uniyal and R.K. Murthi who were good enough to offer them useful suggestions.

B-13/505, Lodi Colony
New Delhi-11003
December 9, 1984.

B.K. Ahluwalia
Shashi Ahluwalia

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The Smooth Succession

Wednesday, October 31, 1984, Time : 6.55 p.m. The swearing in ceremony of the sixth Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, was taking place. He signed the oath of office and secrecy at 6.57 p.m. With that, the smooth and instant transition of leadership took place. This smooth succession is a tribute to India's political stability and maturity. The President, Giani Zail Singh, had been informed in a hand-written letter signed by Mr. G. Karuppiah Moopanar, the AICC (I) general secretary attached to the Congress (I) Parliamentary Board, that the CPB had decided to appoint the son of Mrs. Indira Gandhi as the new leader of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party. The President of India accepted the choice of the CPB. (I).

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's succession as Prime Minister is the smoothest so far in independent India's history. There was no question of taking party members' consensus, *a la* Kamraj style. No contenders were there either. Even if one goes by the official timing of Mrs. Gandhi's death, that is 2.30 p.m. on October 31, Rajiv had assumed the office four and a half hours later, without a ripple from an extremely nervous party.

In the past, when two incumbent Prime Ministers had died, for a while a senior cabinet minister (on both occasions the

then Union Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda) had held interim charge till the CPB elected a leader. On both occasions, in May 1964 and January 1966, there had been many contenders for the post. Morarji Desai, who ultimately became the Janata Prime Minister in 1977, had tried on both occasions. This time there were no known contenders. In 1982, the Congress Party had accepted Rajiv Gandhi as the number two man. So it would be fair to say that in calling him to be the Prime Minister, the President, Giani Zail Singh, acted wisely. Though most party MPs were totally oblivious of what took place on October 31, the fact that the unanimous resolution accepting the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi was passed by the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party on November 2, with 497 of the 505 members present shows that the President's decision was right.

About this smooth succession Ayub Syed has commented : "The smooth transfer of leadership within hours of her assassination is a great tribute to Indira Gandhi's total command over her party in her absence. That the party was psychologically prepared to accept Rajiv as her successor was never in doubt. In the past three years he had travelled extensively, met thousands of people and addressed vast crowds."

He was virtually the party chief. He had reduced the burden of his mother by taking the onerous task of putting the party in shape, modernising it, and keeping it well-oiled to face the battle of the hustings.

The real Rajiv was born the day his mother attained martyrdom. He was without a shadow. He was on his own. The millions who saw him on television with his thin, tight lips, moist eyes, his pointed Nehru nose, his determined forehead, were convinced of Indira Gandhi's right choice. At forty he looked exactly forty, and whenever he looked up he seemed to be telling his mother, "I will not let you down, come what may".

This was a new Rajiv Gandhi, the legatee of a glorious heritage, a true son of a rich soil. Seeing him on TV, standing near Indira Gandhi's body, viewers felt secure, assured. The country, they felt, was safe, its destiny in good hands.

In a few days he won the heart of India, and no doubt he will win its democratic soul also. With his election the nation heaved a sigh of relief. They also saw the faction-ridden ruling party exhibiting a rare show of discipline and loyalty on the issue of selecting their beloved leader's successor.

Kumkum Chadha has narrated events leading to this smooth succession. She writes: "While Mrs. Indira Gandhi lay on the operation table at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), in a swift, smooth transition India's youngest Prime Minister was sworn in. This marked the beginning of an era, it also put to rest all doubts about the unity of the Congress (I).

"The talk of a successor had started at the AIIMS itself around noon. Among those present there were Dr. P. C. Alexander, Arun Nehru, Shiv Shankar, Buta Singh, R. K. Dhawan, G. Parthasarathy, R. Venkataraman, Ghulam Nabi Azad and B. Shankaranand. It was one of the close confidants of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who first suggested his name to Venkataraman and Parthasarathy. After a brief consultation, Venkataraman took a NO OBJECTION from those present. That was the first round.

"Narasimha Rao arrived at AIIMS around 2 p.m. The initial enquiries about Mrs. Gandhi being over he was told of the likely successor; Rao agreed immediately. Things became much easier. That was the second round. That left Pranab—the other claimant. He was to return with Rajiv from West Bengal.

"Rajiv Gandhi and Pranab Mukherjee arrived around 3.30 p.m. By then there was a consensus on Rajiv. Accordingly, he was informed of the decision. Rajiv agreed. Pranab nodded his head. That was the final round.

"The scene shifted from the AIIMS to 1, Akbar Road, where Cabinet Ministers, Chief Ministers and senior Party men were waiting. A meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board was in progress. Many of those who were outside were made to believe that deliberations were on for a likely successor. Of the five members of CPB, only two—Rao and Pranab—were present at the meeting. Kamalapati Tripathi had not arrived from Varanasi. The other two to attend the CPB were Secretary CPB, G.K. Moopanar, and Sita Ram Kesari.

"After a 'half-an-hour closed door' meeting the four emerged. It was P.C. Alexander who told the waiting Chief Ministers and Cabinet that (a) the new Prime Minister would be sworn in the same evening and (b) the members of Mrs. Gandhi's Cabinet would be retained by the new Prime Minister. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's name was not mentioned.

"According to one version, President Giani Zail Singh had too, while flying back to Delhi from his visit abroad, taken the decision to make Rajiv Gandhi the Prime Minister after he learnt about Mrs. Gandhi's death. This is confirmed by a journalist who was travelling with the President. He had heard the President conveying the decision to his Secretary, Bandopadhyaya.

"What smoothed the choice of Rajiv Gandhi was the absence of a candidate who could fill the void Mrs. Gandhi's death had caused. One of the important reasons for choosing Rajiv was the forthcoming elections. As things stand, none of the Congress (I) men have an all-India image. Nor are they vote-catchers of the stature of Mrs. Gandhi. Rajiv would not only be able to cash in on the Gandhi name but evoke public sympathy as no one else would be able to."

Mr. Kuldip Nayar has ably summed up the story of succession in his famous column 'Between the Lines'. Here are some excerpts :

"The discussion on who should succeed Mrs. Gandhi began at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences itself. In the room where the Cabinet Ministers waited, knowing well that she was practically dead after being hit by 16 bullets, the question debated was who should step in, first as the officiating Prime Minister and then as the elected one.

"All those who could lay claim to the post were away from Delhi—Rajiv Gandhi and Pranab Mukherjee were in West Bengal, Narasimha Rao, who ranked No. 3 was in Hyderabad, and Defence Minister S.B. Chavan in Moscow. President Zail Singh himself was abroad.

"The practice that President Radhakrishnan had established after Nehru's death was that the Cabinet should take over until the ruling party elected a new leader. After the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the same practice had been followed. If that

precedent was to be followed, the officiating Prime Minister would have been Pranab. Some Cabinet Ministers pressed for that. But some others pointed out that he was member of the Upper House and younger to Narasimha Rao. One minister said that it would be better to choose Rao not only because he was a Lok Sabha member but also because he was from the South. The trend of discussion favoured Pranab by the time he, Narasimha Rao and Rajiv returned to Delhi to join the informal meeting. Rajiv left the matter to them.

"It was Vasant Sathe, Minister for Fertilizers in Mrs. Gandhi's Cabinet, who said that there was no need to have an officiating Prime Minister and they should straightforwardly choose Rajiv. He argued that when Nehru and Shastri died, there were several contestants for the post of the Prime Minister but now there was none and since the party was bound to elect Rajiv afterwards, why not have him in the post now ?

"Adept in constitutional matters, Sathe pointed out that there was nothing in the constitution to suggest that the President had to invite the elected leader of the party having a majority in the Lok Sabha to form the Government, nor was there mention of an officiating Prime Minister. He said that the relevant provision was Article 75 which merely said : "The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister" Shiv Shankar, once Law Minister in Mrs. Gandhi's Cabinet, endorsed Sathe's thesis.

"Since all eyes were fixed on the next Lok Sabha election, the Ministers and the Congress (I) functionaries present knew that Rajiv Gandhi was their best bet. He would go down with voters better than anyone else. He would be able to harness the nation's sympathy in the wake of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. He also represented the vote-catching family of Nehru, as Nehru's grandson and Mrs. Gandhi's son, the people would feel that if he was elected they would be assured the continuity for generations.

"R. Venkataraman, the Vice-President, lent his mature counsel during the discussion and put his weight in favour of Rajiv. There was no question of an acting Prime Minister first and a permanent one later. The discussion continued at

the Congress (I) party office at Akbar Road. But, by then, there was nothing left to be decided except the wording of the communication to the President. This was left to G.K. Moopanar, the party's general-secretary. The letter to the President said that the Congress Parliamentary Board had elected Rajiv as the leader and that the decision would be endorsed by the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party. (Pranab and Narasimha Rao were the only two parliamentary board members present when the decision was taken.)

"Moopanar sent the letter by a special messenger to the President, who had not yet arrived from abroad. The letter awaited him at Rashtrapati Bhavan as did Rajiv, Pranab, Narasimha Rao, Buta Singh and Lok Sabha Speaker Jakhar. The President returned to Rashtrapati Bhavan around 6 p.m. after visiting the medical institute. He was visibly disturbed because his motorcade had been stoned and the car of his secretary A.C. Bandopadhyay had been hit.

"The President knew about Rajiv's election because both Arun Nehru and R.K. Dhawan, Mrs. Gandhi's personal assistant, had met him at the airport. The constitutional position was explained to him by Sathe at Rashtrapati Bhavan and as men near to the President say, he had no choice except to swear in Rajiv after receiving the communication from the Congress (I). And within 45 minutes he did so, administering the oath not only to Rajiv but also to Pranab, Narasimha Rao, Shiv Shankar and Buta Singh.

"Rajiv never faced any challenge within his party because there was none on whom the stalwarts would have agreed. He was a key which fitted into various locks. That is the position even today. Most Congress (I) MPs realise that the only chance they have to survive is to ride on his bandwagon as they had on Mrs. Gandhi's. On their own, they have very little to offer, hardly anyone has his or her own base.

"Rajiv's succession reminds me of what happened when Nehru died. Though he had been ailing, the end came much sooner than expected. In fact, the general impression was that he was recovering. Everybody was caught unprepared, the contenders as well as the king-makers. Kamraj, then Congress President, hurried back to Delhi in a chartered plane. Atulya

Ghosh came from Calcutta and Morarji Desai from a Delhi suburb.

“Nehru’s body was still at Teen Murti Bhavan when discussion on the succession began. Some leaders went into a huddle, not far from where the body lay. The scene at the medical institute, where Mrs. Gandhi died, was no different. However, this time there was no contestant.

“Rajiv Gandhi did make a good impression as he took the oath of office his face drawn but his voice firm, putting aside his personal grief. His maiden speech was dignified and came from the heart without the politician’s rhetoric.

“And almost his first order to the Chief Ministers, who had come to Delhi on hearing that Mrs. Gandhi was shot, to return to the States to maintain law and order showed that he had a proper sense of priorities.”

The smooth and peaceful succession of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister is demonstration of India’s quick resilience to brace challenges and of the firmness with which democracy had struck roots in the country. Those who participated in the process brought memorable credit to their deep commitment to supreme national interest.

It may be pointed out that even while millions of Indian people saw in this development a ray of hope for India’s stability, security and peace, the leaders of the Opposition were back to their old game by condemning it as unconstitutional. For more than a decade they had been denigrating Mrs. Gandhi by using constitutional verbiage. This time they did not have even locus standi to challenge the appointment of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister, for they were neither contenders for that office, nor did they belong to the ruling party. That, however, did not deter Mr. Charan Singh from leading a delegation to the President to lodge a protest. Apparently, they were banking upon possible political squabbles in the Congress Party over the choice of Prime Minister and hoped to make political capital out of them. This opportunity was denied to them. They were equally aghast at the rolling tide of support which swept the country in favour of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. To hide their political frustration and to kick up some political dust, they once again, as usual, camouflaged their attack on this

development, which is likely to go down in history as one of Indian democracy's finest hours, with constitutional fulminations.

The most befitting answer was given to them by the ruling party itself in less than two days when it not only elected Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, but also unanimously endorsed his appointment as the Prime Minister of India.

The smooth and instant transition of leadership to Rajiv Gandhi after the assassination of Indira Gandhi came in for high praise from diverse quarters, ranging from prestigious political pundits in the United States to the Left Front Co-ordination Committee in West Bengal. The uneventful assumption of Prime Ministership by Rajiv Gandhi was viewed as an indication of India's political maturity and the underlying stability of the nation's polity.

Not, however, by our Opposition parties. Led by Chaudhury Charan Singh of Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party, they have chosen to take umbrage at the fact that Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in by President Zail Singh on the recommendation of the Congress-I Parliamentary Board. The point they make is that the President went against established convention in acceding to the recommendation of the CPB, without waiting for the full Congress-I Parliamentary Party to endorse Rajiv Gandhi as its leader.

Charan Singh led a delegation to Rashtrapati Bhavan, demanding that the President "immediately convene a meeting of Opposition leaders to restore the lost sense of confidence amongst the people." We are free to admit that we have observed no signs of a lack of confidence among the people.

Not to be outdone, the national executive of the Bharatiya Janata Party adopted a resolution claiming that in choosing Rajiv Gandhi the ruling party disregarded propriety as well as precedent.

But perhaps the most vociferous protest came from the four Magis of the Janata Party—George Fernandes, Syed Shahabuddin, Bapu Kaldate and Sarojini Mahishi—who found in the President's action a "serious violation of parliamentary norms and democratic traditions."

The wind has, of course, been knocked out of the Opposition's sails by the unanimous election of Rajiv Gandhi as leader of the CPP. But that will probably not stop the carping by the Opposition which is plainly attempting to bring to life a brouhaha over a non-existent controversy.

What is the convention that the Opposition is referring to? On two earlier occasions, after the death of Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri the President had made temporary arrangements by swearing in the seniormost Minister as interim Prime Minister. But what the Opposition parades of propriety, who now wrangle for an ass's shadow, do not seem to realise is that there were other contenders in the field and a majority decision by the CPP was unavoidable.

In the present case, the entire Cabinet, including members of the CPB called on the President and urged him to appoint Rajiv Gandhi to head the government, in order to end a state of political uncertainty. If the President had followed precedent, his choice would have been either Union Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, or Home Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao. Both these Ministers were in the delegation that urged the President on behalf of the CPB to make Rajiv Gandhi the Prime Minister.

That apart, it does not take any noumenal attributes to realise that Rajiv Gandhi was indeed number two in the country and the party after Indira Gandhi. The Opposition's nugatory objection to his elevation constitutes an exercise in hair-splitting inanity. Any delay or uncertainty in choosing a successor could well have resulted in a painful shiver passing through the entire nation.

It is no business of the Opposition who the Congress (I) selects as its leader, as long as the individual enjoys majority support. And in any case, Rajiv Gandhi, during the short period he has been in politics, has displayed qualities of leadership and an innate ability to grasp details of complex issues. He has also brought to the fore a fresh approach in developing grassroot contacts and assessing the weaknesses of the party machine. Perhaps more importantly, Rajiv Gandhi tends to be coolly clinical and is apparently averse to the politically baroque.

The Opposition leaders, who possibly see a diminution of their own political stature as a result of the smooth change-over, should ponder the sage comment of a wise man : We should often be ashamed of our noblest actions if all their motives were known. That also goes for the Ananias who pose as profound political experts in suggesting a possible break-up of the ruling party.

Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan and Mr. Sharad Yadav, both general secretaries of DMKP, described the appointment of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi as "arbitrary and unjustified."

In a statement they maintained that it was well established under Article 75 of the Constitution that the President shall appoint as Prime Minister a person only after he was elected leader of the majority party. "The President has no prerogative thereunder to pick and choose anybody for appointment as Prime Minister on the pretext of national unity and integrity," they stated.

The DMKP leaders were reacting to President Zail Singh's reported observation while talking to a group of Punjab Congress (I) leaders that he had appointed Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister on October 31 in exercise of his prerogative on the pattern of the British Monarch and that the appointment of an interim Prime Minister would have created more problems and difficulties.

They maintained that the views of the President in this regard were "deplorable and dangerous" for democracy in the country. Under the British parliamentary system and all other democracies in the world, only the elected leader of the majority party was appointed Prime Minister. It was not the prerogative of the British Monarch to select or choose anyone from the majority party for appointment as Prime Minister.

The President had broken the convention of appointing the seniormost Cabinet Minister as interim Prime Minister in the event of death of the Prime Minister and his continuance as such till the ruling party elects another leader. The process adopted by the President could not be called a democratic one, they added.

The installation of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister by the President, Giani Zail Singh, on the basis of the opinion given by just two Congress parliamentary board members was against established conventions, the DMK President, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, said.

Speaking to newsmen, he said the selection was an internal matter of the Congress but the procedure adopted by the President even as an "interim arrangement" was not acceptable to the DMK.

The objection raised by some Opposition parties to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's appointment can be viewed thus: It was ungracious as well as revealing of the frustrations of a group of tired old men to question the succession at a time when the nation is plunged in deep sorrow. Mr. Charan Singh's march to Rashtrapati Bhavan would have had some justification if the choice had come as a total surprise preceded by serious controversy within the ruling party. But if the selection seems hasty and is meant to forestall squabbling among contenders, it is up to the Congress (I) later to decide on a new course. As things stand, the election does not appear to represent a major departure from existing conventions.

Objections carry even less weight because it is the Congress (I)'s business to decide whether the entire Parliamentary Board selects the new leader or a few people who were known to be close to Mrs. Gandhi. It is worthwhile recalling in this context that those who now question Congress (I) functioning left it to two private individuals, Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Kripalani, to select India's first Janata Prime Minister.

Three senior Supreme Court advocates and four lawyers said that it was "proper and absolutely" constitutional for President Zail Singh to appoint Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister.

In a joint statement, they pointed out that the President was only required to exercise his choice in appointing the Prime Minister after finding out to his satisfaction as to who was likely to command the confidence of the Parliament.

The advocates expressed surprise at the constitutional controversy raised by some lawyers and leaders of political parties at the appointment of Rajiv Gandhi as the new Prime Minister.

The signatories to the statement were A.N. Mulla, A.K. Sen and M.C. Bhandare, all senior Supreme Court advocates, R.N. Mittal, convener of the AICC legal cell, Y.K. Sabharwal, President of the Delhi High Court Bar Association, H.R. Bhardwaj and Virendra Sood, both lawyers.

According to the statement, the criticism levelled against the President was claimed to be based on what happened after the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. On both occasions the President was not certain as to who would be elected leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party.

The leadership of the Congress Parliamentary Party was contested by Morarji Desai until the last moment in the first case, in the second case, also the leadership was contested, the statement pointed out.

Hence the President had appointed an interim Prime Minister and allowed the Congress Parliamentary Party to elect a leader who would be ultimately appointed as Prime Minister.

In the present case, President Zail Singh had no uncertainty as to who was going to be the leader of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party, the statement said.

Besides, the two seniormost members of the Council of Ministers, Pranab Mukherjee and P.V. Narasimha Rao, had also advised the President that Rajiv Gandhi might be appointed as the Prime Minister. Then, where was the question of appointing either of them as the interim Prime Minister, the lawyers asked.

Dr. Parmanand of the Department of Political Science, School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education, University of Delhi, has effectively refuted the charges of the opposition regarding the appointment of Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister. To quote him, "Some constitutional pundits as well as some opposition leaders have tried to raise an avoidable controversy over the appointment of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister of the country. Constitutional provisions in this regard are clear : The provisions under Article 74 of the Constitution make the Prime Minister not only an essential part of the Ministers but also its head. With the death or resigna-

tion of the Prime Minister, the Ministry stands automatically dissolved.

"As our constitutional system allows of no vacuum on this plane and as it envisages no situation in which the President can function without a Council of Ministers, the President had to appoint a successor of Mrs. Gandhi immediately. Instructively, the President performed this as his first task on arrival at Delhi from Yemen.

"As for the appointment of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to this post, the President was fully within his right, power and authority to do so. Article 75 (I) of our constitution empowers the President to appoint the Prime Minister and it places no constitutional constraints on him in this regard. He could appoint anyone as Prime Minister. True, Article 75 (3) makes the Council of Ministers "collectively responsible" to the House of the People, and the President, in order to have a stable ministerial council, would certainly appoint someone commanding or expected to command a majority in the Lok Sabha. Here, too, Rajiv Gandhi is much better placed than any other Congress (I) M.P. The modus operandi of appointing the seniormost member of the preceding Cabinet as Prime Minister cannot be said to be an established convention. The appointment of G.L. Nanda as the Prime Minister subsequent to the death of Nehru and Shastri was also valid because the then President, Mr. Radhakrishnan, decided to do so. In a situation like this the President is not bound by the advice of any ministry for with the death of the Prime Minister the ministers have no locus standi as ministers. In this particular case any past precedent had become altogether meaningless because the two seniormost ministers of the preceding Cabinet had themselves recommended to the President the name of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi."

Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal said that the installation of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the country's Prime Minister was an internal party matter and was thoroughly democratic and constitutional.

Answering questions at a press conference Mr. Bhajan Lal said that those who described it otherwise lacked common sense. The fact that the decision of the Congress (I) Parliament-

ary Board was endorsed unanimously a day later was enough to authenticate the party's viewpoints, he remarked.

He further said that Mr. Gandhi commanded love and respect of the partymen as well as the people. The unity this time in the rank and file and in the leadership was even more than at any time before even during the time of late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

He appealed to all, particularly partymen, to lend Mr. Gandhi full support as he was the only one who could save the country from the threats of regionalism and communalism.

These observations were made by him at a press conference held in Chandigarh on November 6.

Mr. Murlidhar C. Bhandare, M.P., has said that there is no constitutional impropriety in the appointment of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister and controversy on the matter is 'irrelevant'.

In a statement, the M.P. held that the constitution does not require appointment of the seniormost minister of council of ministers as an interim caretaker Prime Minister.

Mr. Bhandare has said that in the parliamentary form of democracy the President has really no choice and his choice is limited by political conditions. If the party in majority has a recognised leader, that leader must become the Prime Minister.

In this case, he said, "the Congress (I) party is the largest party in Parliament and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi after Mrs. Indira Gandhi is its recognised leader. The Congress (I) Parliamentary Board is a repository of confidence of the Congress Parliamentary Party. The Congress Parliamentary Party unanimously elected Mr. Rajiv Gandhi."

Mr. Bhandare added that the previous precedents cited were not relevant. What happened after the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru or Lal Bahadur Shastri could not be applied in this case since at that time the choice of the successor was not clear.

Absence of any dissent in the Congress Party on the election of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the party leader was a "wise and correct" decision of the Congress Parliamentary Board. Above all the election of the Prime Minister was to secure stability in Government. When the final choice was clear

there was no question of any interim arrangement, the statement said.

It further [said, "The election of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi ended uncertainty at a critical time in our country. Over hundred Heads of State who attended Mrs. Indira Gandhi's funeral could also meet the real Prime Minister, and not a caretaker Prime Minister." Even Chief Justice Chandrachud had a word of praise for the smooth transition of power under such tragic and traumatic circumstances.

Mr. Sitanshu Das in a signed article published in *Patriot* has observed that there is no "impropriety" in the choice of Rajiv as Prime Minister. He writes :

"The day after Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in as Prime Minister—an effort is being made to cast doubt on the propriety of the President's decision to commission him to form the new government. It is said that the President should have appointed the senior-most Cabinet Minister the "interim" Prime Minister, pending the election of new leader by the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party. This, so runs the argument, would have accorded with the Westminster procedure which we followed in this country.

"The objection though seemingly plausible, has no basis either in the Indian Constitution or the Westminster conventions we have adopted. Article 75 vests in the President the power to decide who, in his judgement, as Prime Minister is most likely to ensure good government according to the Constitution. In exercising his judgement the President is guided by Sections (3) and (5) and of Article 75 which prescribe that the Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha (in other words, should have majority backing in the lower house) and Ministers have to be members of Parliament at least within six months of their appointment.

"The Prime Minister, of course, has to enjoy the backing of the majority in the Lok Sabha. But on the UK analogy, the election of the leader by the majority party or block can follow, and not always precede the Crown's decision to ask a leader to form the government. Indeed, until the seventies, the British Conservative Party had no procedure for electing its leader in the Parliament. The Conservative MP who, in the Crown's

estimate, was most likely to receive majority backing of the party, was commissioned to form the government and the ruling party accepted him as the leader.

"In this instance, the Congress (I) Parliamentary Board and the outgoing Cabinet are said to have jointly commended Rajiv Gandhi as the leader whom the President should appoint as Prime Minister. Constitutionally, and by convention, the recommendation can be compared with the customary consultations the UK monarch initiates before the choice of the Prime Minister is made. The CPB's recommendation was good as a measure of abundant caution, though the President would have been within his rights to decide this question even without a recommendation.

"An effort, therefore, is being made to create an impression that (a) an impropriety has been committed, and (b) that the Head of State was persuaded by pressure to commit this impropriety. Both conclusions are wrong. The procedure adopted accords with the Constitution and is permissible by UK conventions."

The Times of India has also supported the smooth succession of Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister. "The pertinent issue now is whether on the day of the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi should have hurriedly been sworn in as Prime Minister, or whether it would have been better to have followed the precedents and sworn in the seniormost member of the existing cabinet as "acting" Prime Minister and bring in Mr. Rajiv Gandhi subsequently if and when the Congress Parliamentary Party had elected him as its leader. There is something to be said in favour of the view that such a course should have been followed.

"Let us look at the precedents. Mr. Nehru died a natural death and the issue of succession to him had been settled well in advance when under the pretext of the Kamraj plan he had sent out Mr. Morarji Desai and subsequently brought Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri back into the Union Cabinet. Those were also normal times with the result that there was no urgent need to rush Mr. Shastri's appointment. A more or less similar situation obtained at the time of Mr. Shastri's death in January, 1966. Since he was not expected to pass away so

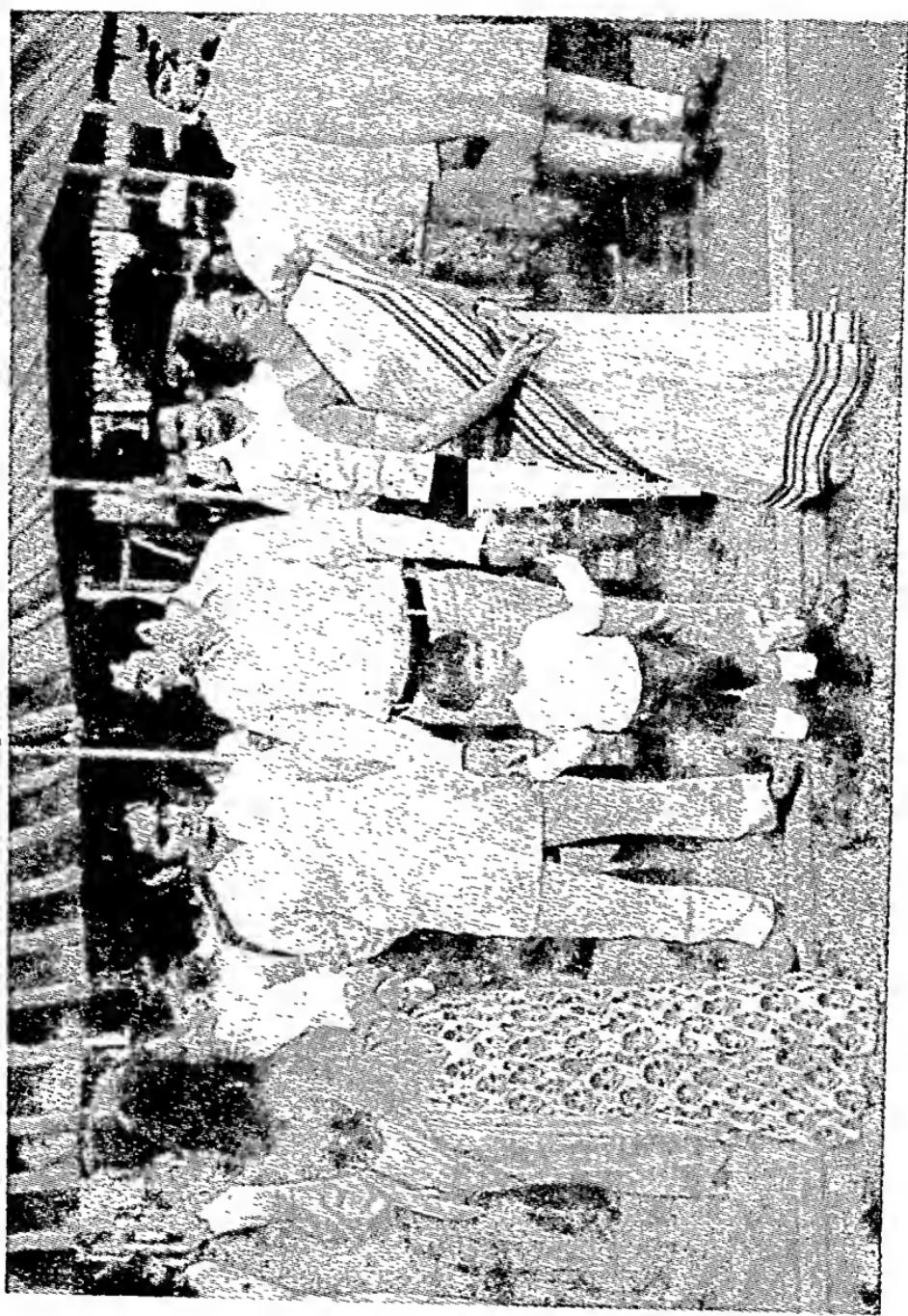


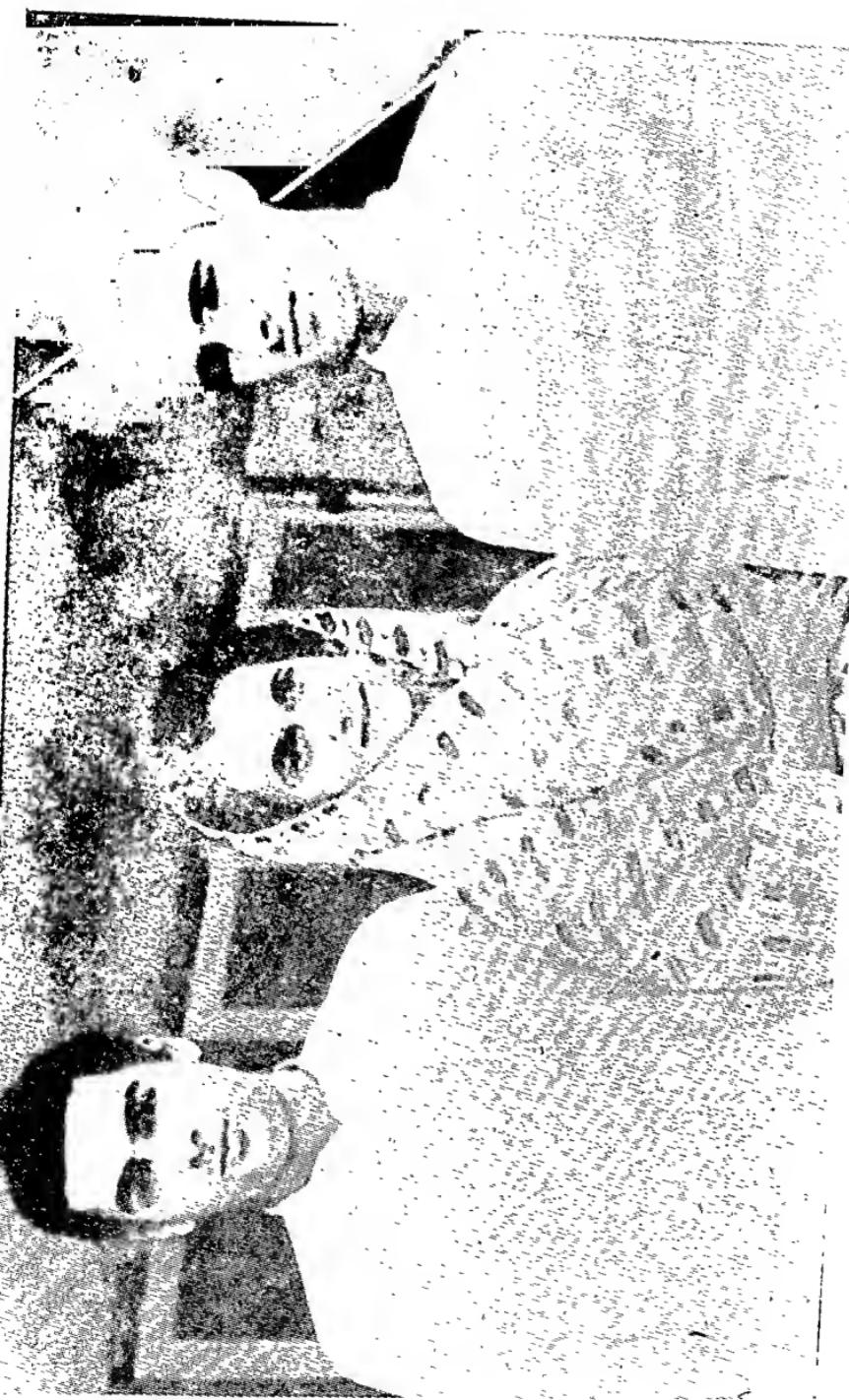
1. Portrait of our Prime Minister.



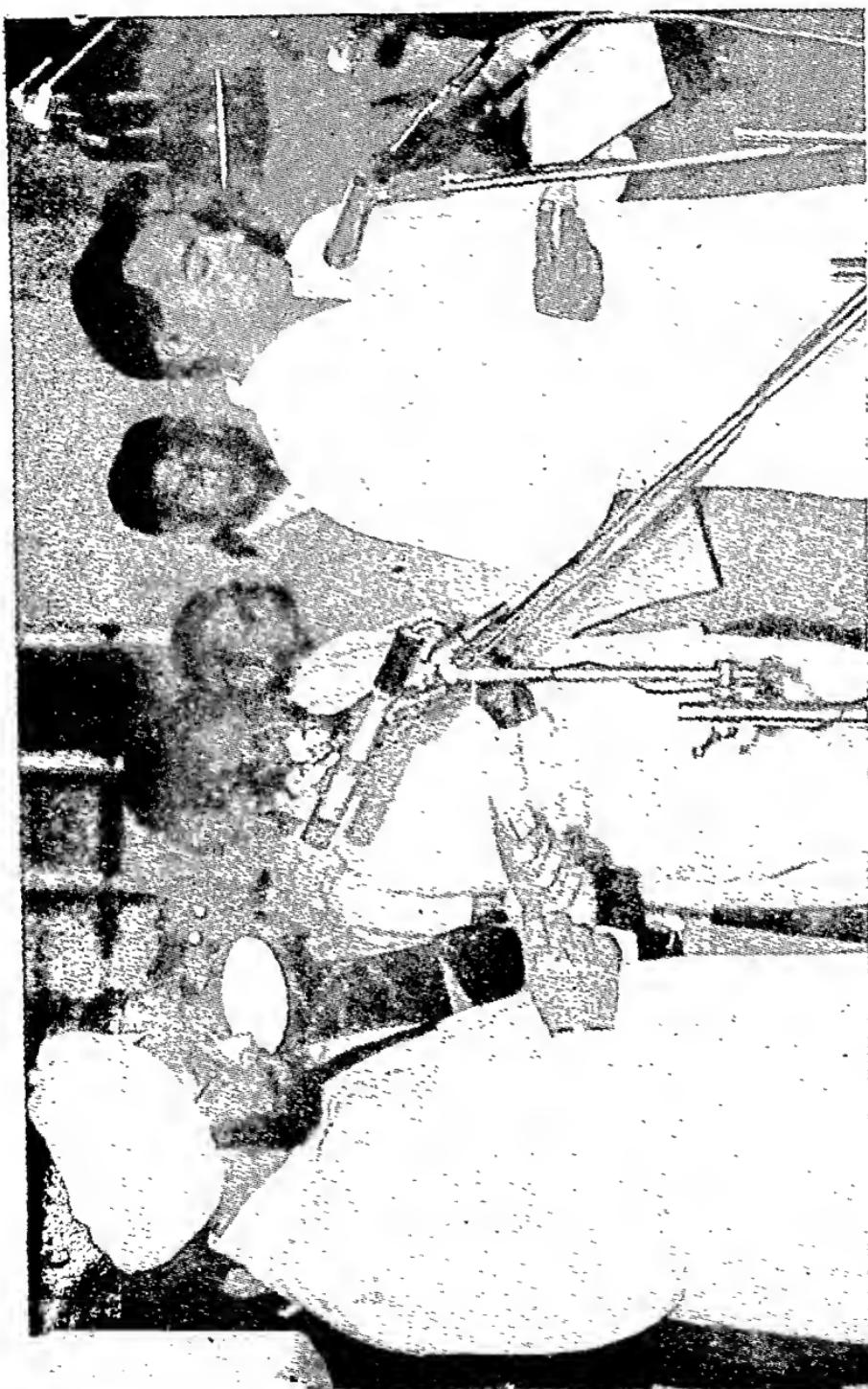
2. With Indira Gandhi.

3. With Family Members.





4. With Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi.



5. Taking the oath of the office of Prime Minister, October 31, 1984.



6. Paying homage to the body of Smt. Indira Gandhi, November 1, 1984



7. With Abdul Hameed, Prime Minister of Algeria on November 2, 1984.



8. With King Jigme Singye of Bhutan and the PLO Chairman,
Yasser Arafat on November 2, 1984.

soon, a successor to him had not been chosen. But once he did pass away, Mrs. Gandhi's election as his successor was a foregone conclusion despite Mr. Desai's insistence on a contest. Again, the war with Pakistan was over and the country did not face an emergency. For these two reasons—Mr. Desai's insistence on a contest and the absence of an emergency—Mr. G.L. Nanda was once again permitted to act as Prime Minister till such time as the Congress Parliamentary Board could meet and elect Mrs. Gandhi as its leader.

"This time the situation was totally different. Mrs. Gandhi's assassination itself underscored the difference. It was a most dramatic demonstration of the twin facts that extremists and secessionists, acting with or without the support of external agency or agencies and the tacit approval of a substantial section of their community, had infiltrated into critical organs of the state apparatus and that they (and their masters if any) were determined to undermine the Indian state. It is not possible for us to say whether or not those who had murdered Mrs. Gandhi and their mentors and paymasters, if any, had anticipated the violent reaction that has followed it. We have no evidence either way. The reaction throughout the country was, however, a well known fact by the afternoon of the black Wednesday (October 31).

"The situation called for a quick move to fill the vacuum, to the extent it could be, so that the administrative machinery could act with whatever degree of coherence it is capable of.

"India today needs above all a firm hand at the helm. He has passed one test of leadership remarkably well. He has shown an extraordinary capacity to remain calm in the face of a great personal and national tragedy and the mad reaction to it on the part of lakhs of our people. This should stand him in good stead in the difficult days and weeks ahead."

Supporting the appointment of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, the Conference for Human Rights (India) clearly pointed out, in a resolution unanimously adopted by the members at a meeting held on November 6, that the President's obligation in this context arose through Article 75 of the Constitution of India.

What is implied under this provision, the resolution stated, was the fact that such appointment had to be of a person who could command a majority in the House of the People.

The appointment of an interim Prime Minister stood valid only if the President felt any doubt about a person in commanding majority.

The conference expressed dismay over the unsavoury controversy raised about the alleged impropriety on the part of the President for having sworn in Mr. Gandhi as Prime Minister.

Mr. Lalit Bhasin, former chairman of Bar Council of Delhi, said that the criticism by some Opposition parties over the action of the President in swearing in Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister was devoid of any rational basis and was wholly unwarranted, unjustified and untenable in the circumstances existing at that time.

He said that the so-called precedents cited by the Opposition were no precedents at all. The case of Mr. Gulzari Lal Nanda, who became Prime Minister for some time, was entirely different.

The Constitution did not provide for any appointment of the Prime Minister as an interim measure, he added.

Moreover, the Congress (I) Parliamentary Board's choice of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister was unanimously ratified by the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party at the earliest available time.

Dr. V.A. Seyid Muhammad has tried to summarize the reasons for the opposition's reaction to Rajiv's smooth succession. According to him, opposition's reaction springs from its abysmal gloom and frustration. To quote him : Some opposition parties have criticised President Zail Singh for the appointment of Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister. Charan Singh, chairman of the nascent DMKP, led a delegation to the President with the object of restoring the "lost sense of confidence amongst the people". On November 1 the BJP passed a resolution criticising the appointment. The Janata Party which is very much battered is not in a mood to make a pronouncement. But four of its stalwarts stated that the President's action is a violation of "parliamentary norms and democratic traditions."

The "smooth and instant" transition of leadership to Rajiv Gandhi in an extremely critical and perilous situation has

earned universal acclaim. India's political stability and maturity have been highly praised. But the opposition thought it necessary to raise such a controversial issue. Eternal vigilance is a high price a nation pays for safeguarding democracy. But shouting wolf too often and too glibly is likely to be counter-productive.

Normally since the Congress Parliamentary Party has promptly elected Rajiv Gandhi as its leader the controversy should be over. But considering the unfortunate predicament of the Opposition, renewed fretting and fuming are very much there.

The gravamen of criticism is that the President instead of appointing Rajiv Gandhi should have according to precedent appointed one of the senior-most outgoing ministers. The precedents cited are the appointment of Gulzari Lal Nanda as the interim Prime Minister on two occasions after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Expressions like "impropriety", "Parliamentary norms" and "democratic traditions" are too wide and vague unless well explained relating them clearly to the present context. "Precedent" and "conventions" are well defined and clearly understood terms and have precise connotations in Parliamentary parlance. Precedent can be defined as earlier occurrence which serves as a rule for future conduct in similar cases. For precedent to be operative the basic facts and circumstances must be substantially similar on both the earlier and subsequent occasions. Where there are fundamental differences "precedents" cannot be invoked. The expression "convention" means a rule, custom or procedure widely accepted and well established by long and continuous use. "Precedent" need not, however, be established by long and continuous use. Even one instance may suffice.

In Parliamentary democracy when the post of the Prime Minister becomes vacant and when the competent and appropriate body (in the present case the CPP) has not elected a leader the compulsions of the situation may require the Head of the State (in India the President) to appoint a Prime Minister ad-interim. It is entirely at the discretion of the Head of the State to decide whom he should appoint. Of course he should not exercise that

discretion whimsically or arbitrarily. He is entitled and even bound to take all relevant facts and circumstances into consideration. If there is any law governing such exercise he should strictly follow it. In the absence of any law he has to see whether there is a precedent or convention and if there is none he is at complete liberty to act according to his best judgement. He may seek advice and guidance from any quarters which he deems appropriate.

In India since there is no law governing the situation, the President has to seek guidance from precedents or conventions, if any. On the two earlier occasions when the Prime Minister died the CPP had not elected a leader. There the similarity ends. On the earlier occasions there were quite a few and serious contenders for the post and there was no consensus among the outgoing ministers as to who should be the choice. In the present case two of the senior-most retiring ministers themselves along with almost the entire retiring Council of Ministers requested the President to appoint Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister. It was impossible and impractical under the circumstances for the President to appoint one of the two senior ministers. Was the President expected to promulgate an ordinance directing either Narasimha Rao and Pranab Mukherjee to take the oath of secrecy? Even when one is bent upon making an issue out of nothing there should be some limit to absurdity.

There is no convention in existence for the President to observe and follow. Just as one swallow does not make a summer two recent instances where the President appointed Nanda do not establish a convention since long and continuous usage is essential for the establishment of a convention.

BJP seems to be obsessed with the "ruling party's commitment to dynastic rule". The fact that Lal Bahadur Shastri was not a member of the "dynasty" is adequate reply to the allegation against the Congress Party. But let us proceed further. Except in 1977 the people of this country placed their full confidence in one or other member of the "dynasty". Does this fact prove the commitment of the Indian people to "dynastic rule"? When in six out of the seven Lok Sabha elections our people gave their mandate to rule either to Nehru

or Mrs. Gandhi they were expressing their firm faith and conviction that these two great people were the best to be the Prime ministers of this country. The same applies to the ruling party. The Congress Party has every reason to be gratified and proud of the fact that the massive Indian electorate has six out of seven times endorsed its 'choice. The party firmly believes with abiding faith in the innate wisdom of the Indian people that they will again endorse its choice very soon.

Two Roosevelts, Theodore and Frank'in, were elected Presidents of the US; two Pitts, Pitt the elder and his son Pitt the younger became Prime Ministers in the UK; Winston Churchill had two of his sons-in-law as members of his Cabinet, and in France the French Socialist Party put up Mitterrand as its Presidential candidate and his son as a candidate to the legislature and the French electorate elected both of them. It was never even whispered that the concerned parties were committed to dynastic rule.

There is a significant point which is likely to be overlooked. While Indira Gandhi was alive the Opposition's allegation was that she was trying to establish a "dynastic rule". But the next day after her tragic demise the BJP came out with a resolution declaring that it is the ruling party which is committed to dynastic rule. Why this astonishing somersault?

The Opposition is in a state of abysmal gloom and frustration. They hoped that after the sad and tragic death of Indira Gandhi there would be a prolonged, dissipating and divisive war of succession in the Congress Party. Nothing would have suited them better. But unfortunately for them, the party emerged fully united and the transition was smooth and instant, Dr. Seyid Muhammed added.

Unlike some other Opposition parties, the Left parties do not view the succession of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister in terms of any perpetuation of "dynastic rule".

While the Communist Party of India says this is no time for going into "technicalities", the CPI-M says it will judge the new leader solely by policies and performance.

Both the parties also point out that Mr. Gandhi has now been duly elected leader of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party.

CPI-M General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad, when

approached, said : "We are concerned with policies and performance. Who succeeds is not of relevance to us."

CPI General Secretary C. Rajeswara Rao said there was no point in entering into technicalities, particularly at a time when the country was in a delicate state with grim portents for its unity. Anyway, Mr. Gandhi had been unanimously elected leader by his party, he said.

Mr. Namboodiripad said that, in the formal sense, his party was not in the picture as the leadership question was to be decided by the ruling party. "In the political sense, however, we did not want any uncertainty. The Congress (I) took an immediate decision in this matter. We feel this smooth change-over is good", he said.

Mr. Namboodiripad said his party would extend all co-operation to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's Government to deal with the present communal situation in the country.

The Marxist leader said, his party had nothing personally against Mrs. Indira Gandhi either. In the crucial period of 1969, we extended our support to her. "It is all a question of policy," he added.

An emergency meeting of the Karnataka PCC (I) commended the appointment of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, and congratulated the President for taking this "right and timely step" in the country's interest.

The meeting presided over by Mr. K.H. Patil, KPCC (I) president, in a resolution dismissed some political leaders' criticism of the appointment as "frivolous and unwarranted".

The meeting also extended its full support to Mr. Gandhi.

The resolution said Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had been "brought up in a great heritage of selfless service, devotion to the country's freedom, unity and integrity and a deep sense of commitment to the cause of the downtrodden. He could boldly face the challenges that were before the nation at this hour of crisis and reassure the nation.

The executive committee called upon the people to boldly support Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and contribute their mite to the maintenance of peace and preservation of the country's unity.

The meeting requested the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, to agree to shoulder the additional responsibility of

the party's presidentship in the interests of the party and the country.

A resolution adopted at the meeting said, Mr. Gandhi was the right person to guide the Congress party at this crucial juncture and strengthen it to face the challenges that lay ahead.

A convention of the Youth Congress (I) workers at a meeting held in Sonipat under the chairmanship of Mr. Prem Goel, Haryana Congress (I) leader, welcomed the decision of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Board and party in nominating and electing Rajiv Gandhi as its leader. Nation under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi was safe while the Non-aligned Movement under his dynamic leadership would further grow, he said.

Talking to newsmen, he said that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi would steer the country to glory and save the world in his capacity as the chairperson of NAM from the brink of holocaust.

The decision to choose Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister was hailed by Mr. A.C. Das, MP, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Mr. Das, in a press note, said that at this critical period when the nation was confronted with internal and external dangers, Mr. Gandhi's leadership would fill the gap created by Indira Gandhi.

The founder-president of the All India Federation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes, Dr. V.N. Kaushik, pledged full support of his organisation to the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

In a statement, the founder-president of the federation appealed to all "people of progressive outlook and believing in secular democracy" to come forward in strengthening the hands of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

Goa Cabinet, under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Rane, supported the decision of electing Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister of India and also as leader of the Parliamentary Board.

Daman and Diu Pradesh Youth Congress (I) Committee also welcomed the decision of Congress (I) Parliamentary Board and Party in nominating and electing Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as its leader. Nation under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi was safe while

the Non-aligned Movement under his dynamic leadership would further grow, the resolution said.

The All-India Council of Advocates of Backward Classes pledged its support to the new Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, and expressed the hope that he would steer the country to glory and save the world in his capacity as the chairperson of NAM from the brink of holocaust.

At an emergency meeting the council passed three resolutions. It was attended by the representatives of Gandhi-Nehru World Peace Mission, All-India Council of Advocates of Backward Classes, All-India Bar Association for Free Legal Aid, Advice and Help to Freedom-Fighters and All-India Federation of Backward Classes.

The Backward Classes Cell of the AICC (I) pledged full support to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and said during the first few days of assuming office he had shown remarkable qualities of leadership.

Indian Union Muslim League President, Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait, MP, and its general secretary G.N. Banatwala, MP, conveyed to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi their full support to him in his efforts to combat communalism.

The two IUML leaders who were on pilgrimage to Jeddah returned to India cutting short their post-pilgrimage tour of West Asia when they heard of the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

An IUML Press release said that the two MPs soon after they heard of the event, went to the Indian embassy in Riyadh and condoled the death of Indira Gandhi. They also wrote to the Prime Minister condemning the dastardly murder of Mrs. Gandhi and the violence that followed it.

The youth leaders of all political parties in West Bengal have described the ushering in of the Rajiv Gandhi era as the "new wave" in Indian politics.

The younger generation within the Congress (I), the CPI-M and the other left parties, irrespective of their ideological differences, have welcomed the 40 year-old Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the youngest Prime Minister of India, with the hope that the Indian political scene will once again be enlivened by a fresh set of ideas and radical and dynamic outlook to life replacing

the stagnant and worn out ideals and beliefs held so dearly by "the men over sixty."

To the youth leaders of the Congress (I), Rajiv Gandhi is a "mature politician" who has been on the scene for quite some time now to develop an understanding of the objective situation and the interaction of the political forces operating in the country. Mr. Gandhi has been through the ups and downs and groomed by his mother while in power.

The Indian Communist Party called upon all "progressive forces" including the CPI and CPI-M to extend their whole-hearted support to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to curb communalism with a heavy hand and save the country from external and internal threats.

Party General Secretary Acharya Dipankar in a statement criticised the leaders of the Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party for having indulged in "character assassination". The DMKP leaders, he said, even described Mrs. Indira Gandhi as "enemy No. 1".

When Mrs. Gandhi was struggling for the unity of India and warned against external threat, the agent-provocateurs of international vested interests were engaged in a disruptionist movement, he said.

New York Mayor, Mr. Edward Koch, joined over 3,000 Indians in the city's famous Central Park to pay glowing tributes to the memory of Mrs. Gandhi, and took the occasion to call for international support to India's new Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, in his tasks ahead.

Mr. Koch told a cheering crowd of men, women and children that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was freely chosen in a democracy—not imposed. "But we must try to give him support. He has energy, intellect and ability, and round the world we try to give him support to bring peace to mother India."

Similar sentiments for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi were expressed by another speaker, Rev. Harrington of the New York community church. He described Mr. Gandhi as a man of quality, character and of wonderful and generous disposition.

"He is going to be one of the best loved leaders of India," Rev. Harrington said amidst cheers.

Democratic Congressman, Mr. Stephen Solatz, just back

from New Delhi after attending Mrs. Gandhi's funeral, urged the United States to reaffirm "forcefully, clearly and unequivocally" its commitment to the preservation of the territorial integrity of India.

Soviet Prime Minister, Nikolai Tikhonov, expressed satisfaction with his meeting with Rajiv Gandhi saying the new Indian Prime Minister had a "deep understanding of world situation."

Before leaving for Moscow after attending the funeral of Mrs. Gandhi, Tikhonov told Works and Housing and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Buta Singh, at the airport that he was confident that Rajiv would be able to fill the void created by Mrs. Gandhi's assassination.

We hoped the "youthful and dynamic" leadership of Rajiv would also help strengthen Indo-Soviet relations.

Almost every world leader, Buta Singh told newsmen later, pledged support to Rajiv Gandhi "in this hour of crisis". They felt he was the right choice as leader of the nation because he could hold the people together.

British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, promised to extend all support to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

She told British newsmen that she "liked Gandhi very much indeed" and "I respect him greatly."

"I want you to know that he will have all the loyalty, support, affection and respect that we can give him in the days and months and years that lie ahead", Mrs. Thatcher added.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's fortitude and poise since taking over as the Prime Minister at a time of great personal tragedy and grave crisis for India has impressed British political leaders and commentators who stress that his success in the high office is crucial to the future of India.

The new Indian Prime Minister faced a massive task but "we should never underestimate the strength of India or the strength of its democracy", said Dr. David Owen, leader of the Social Democratic Party, who attended the funeral in New Delhi.

The composure with which Mr. Gandhi received the news of his mother's assassination and his vigorous plea for a sense of balance in his first television appearance as the Prime Minister some hours later had revealed strength and determi-

nation, *The Observer* said in a profile of the new Indian leader.

“Rajiv is seen as pragmatic, cautious and practical—the first ruler with whom India’s disgruntled middle class can identify”, *The Observer* added.

The blend of firmness—for instance calling out the army to deal with rioting and ordering the Chief Ministers to return to their states—and emotion shown by Mr. Gandhi suggested that he had learnt at least some of his mother’s skills, the newspaper wrote.

The *Sunday Times* said that except Mr. Rajiv Gandhi no other member of the Congress (I) could possibly hold India together.

The *Sunday Telegraph* said the vacuum left by Indira Gandhi’s death was so great that only her son could fill it.

Mr. Alain Cass, Asia editor of *Financial Times*, said in a television interview that Mr. Gandhi had shown in the first three days as Prime Minister that he was capable of taking decisions. These two or three days had been quite encouraging.

Mr. Rian Walden, former MP, who presents the widely watched “Weekend World” programme on commercial television, said that no one was better equipped than Mr. Gandhi to heal the country’s division. “He may be India’s last best hope”, he said in the programme which was devoted to an examination of the future of India under Mr. Gandhi.

Iraqi media has widely hailed Mr. Rajiv Gandhi’s assumption of power as an indication that India would continue to play a leading role in the non-aligned movement and as “a staunch and firm friend of the Arab people.”

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said the formation of Mr. Gandhi’s ministry indicated “continuation of Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s policies and maintenance of delicate regional and intra-religious balance, which she had achieved in her party organisation.”

The commentary, published in the *Al-Gamhuria*, the official organ of the Iraqi government, and *Al-Thura*, the mouth-piece of Baath Socialist Party, said, Mr. Gandhi was “genuinely keen to improve ties with India’s neighbours. He will also

continue the old commitments with regard to the Arab countries and non-aligned world."

It added : "Mr. Gandhi has decided to continue with the old team, mainly because he did not want to upset the delicate balance of regions and religions Indira Gandhi had evolved. It also means that political bosses controlling the party machine during her time are to be kept intact for the time being.

"By not bringing his personal political aides, Mr. Gandhi has managed to avoid a lot of controversy and jealousy in the higher echelons of the parliamentary party and thus preserved its present cohesion."

The commentary concluded by saying that the present trend of public opinion was strongly running behind the Prime Minister who was getting a massive support due to sympathy evoked over the "martyrdom" of his mother.

The Japan Times said in its editorial that the decision to appoint Mr. Rajiv Gandhi Prime Minister seemed sound since only the Gandhi name was likely to have enough influence among ordinary Indians to guide the nation through its immediate troubles.

Pressure began to mount on the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, to assume the presidentship of the Congress (I) on the eve of the party's Working Committee meeting. Initially, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was known to be reluctant to take over the stewardship of the party but ultimately he bowed to the wishes of the partymen. Mrs. Indira Gandhi had also headed the party and the government after her return to power in 1980. Mrs. Gandhi assumed the presidentship of the party after the second split in the Congress in January 1978. Jawaharlal Nehru had also at one time headed the government as well as the party. Practically all the party Chief Ministers, legislature party leaders (where the party is not in power) and PCC (I) presidents were of the view that there was no alternative but to choose Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the party chief. Almost all the Congress (I) Legislature Parties passed resolution urging Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to assume the presidentship of the party. The Congress (I) working president, Mr. Kamlapati Tripathi made it known that his main objective was to strengthen the hands of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. The Maharashtra Chief Minister, Mr.

Vasantrao Patil, canvassed for the move to make the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the party president. On the eve of the Congress (I) Working Committee meeting, Mr. Patil met several party leaders and discussed this: he also reiterated the need for all Congressmen to unite on the ground that it was necessary in the "present situation". Mr. Patil met the Finance Minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, the Energy Minister, Mr. Shiv Shankar, and the Steel and Mines Minister, Mr. N.K.P. Salve, the former Commerce Minister and the UPCC (I) president, Mr. V.P. Singh, the former Union Minister, Mr. A.P. Sharma, who resigned as Governor of West Bengal to rejoin active politics, and the former Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chavan.

The North-Eastern Congress (I) Coordinating Committee unanimously resolved that Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi should take over as the president of the party. The Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Hiteshwar Saikia, who is president of the committee, was in the chair. Those present included the Chief Ministers of the Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Nagaland was represented by the Public Health and Engineering Minister. The PCC (I) chiefs and the party MPs from these states were also present. In a resolution the committee urged all members of the AICC (I) to persuade Rajiv Gandhi to take over as the president and lead both the government as well as the party "at this very difficult and agonising time the nation is passing through."

The Kisan Cell of the AICC (I) lent its support to the move in the party to make Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi the Congress (I) president.

The Backward Classes Cell of the AICC also welcomed wholeheartedly the unanimous election of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister. His assumption of office had assured the country and the world of the strength and stability of the democratic system of this country, it maintained.

Accordingly, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was unanimously elected president of the Congress (I) through a resolution adopted by the party's Working Committee. On November 12, he succeeded Mrs. Indira Gandhi as the party chief.

Mr. Gandhi, who was one of the seven general-secretaries of the AICC (I) till his election, arrived at the Working Committee meeting only after the resolution was passed.

Mr. Gandhi's unanimous election as Congress (I) president was widely acclaimed. A number of Chief Ministers, party functionaries and other leaders said the Working Committee's decision would enable the party and the Government to meet the present situation effectively.

They expressed the confidence that Mr. Gandhi would provide dynamic, progressive, courageous and inspiring leadership and the nation would move faster along the path of progress.

Mr. Mool Chand Daga and Mr. Manoranjan Bhakta, MPs and executive committee members of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party, said the party "whole-heartedly applauds the decision of the Indian National Congress. This reflects the will of the people and the desire of the Congressmen in the country."

Mr. Tariq Anwar, MP and Youth Congress President, hailed the unanimous election of Mr. Gandhi as the party president and pledged on behalf of the front organisation, the "best of support and cooperation" to Mr. Gandhi.

Haryana Chief Minister, Bhajan Lal, described Mr. Gandhi as a dynamic, progressive, courageous and inspiring leader who was held in high esteem all over the country.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi took over presidentship of the Indian National Congress(I) on November 12, 1984, pledging to labour tirelessly to further the aims and objectives of the Congress for the advancement of the nation as other members of his family had done in the past.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was elected president of the Congress (I), an office which Mrs. Indira Gandhi had held until her assassination on 31st October, at a meeting of the party's Working Committee to which all the PCC (I) presidents, party Chief Ministers and leaders of various legislature parties were also invited. The election followed increasing demands from Congressmen throughout the country to place him at the party's helm of affairs.

A resolution seeking to elect him to the office was moved by party working president Kamlapati Tripathi and adopted by 71 top Congress(I) functionaries by acclamation. The CWC(I) meeting opened at 10.30 a.m. at 24 Akbar Road which has been the AICC (I) headquarters ever since second split in the party in 1978.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, however, arrived only at 11.45 a.m. after the CWC (I) had unanimously elected him president.

Addressing the CWC (I) after taking over the presidentship, Mr. Gandhi reminded them all and through them the Congressmen at large and the whole nation, how Mrs. Indira Gandhi had alerted the country to beware of the many forces working to weaken the country, both within and outside.

He lambasted at the Opposition parties for playing into the hands of the disruptive forces which were bent upon destabilising and distintegrating the country. While the extremists were seeking destabilisation, the Opposition instead of trying to understand the danger, were further weakening the country. Mr. Gandhi said, everytime the country was divided in the past it became vulnerable to outside forces.

Mr. Gandhi said, he had been given a very big responsibility. "I am really grateful to you. As Mr. Kamlapati Tripathi has just uttered that this position was held by many great leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, I shall try my best to prove worthy of this position", he added. He assured the party workers that he would do his best in performing his duties as party chief.

Mr. Gandhi said it was a well known fact that the Congress had done its best for the development of the country.

Earlier, Mr. Tripathi, who presided over the meeting, said, "now you are occupying the chair in the organisation which was held by Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Indira Gandhi. We are requesting you to accept this post as it is a very responsible post in the organisation. With the addition of this responsibilily now you are carrying a huge burden on your shoulders."

Mr. Tripathi said, "We, the Congress(I) men will cooperate and assist you" and assured that he had the blessings of the elders.

Soon after confirming the minutes of the last Working Committee meeting, Mr. Tripathi moved the resolution urging Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to take over as the party chief.

The resolution said, "in the vacancy caused by the tragic demise of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the president of the Indian National Congress (I) this meeting of the Working Committee unanimously elects Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the Congress (I) president. The Congress (I) Working Committee authorises the president to nominate the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Board."

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi is the fourth member of the family to be elected to the office. In his brief address to the CWC(I) members he recalled that other members of his family before him had held the office but only as means to serve the Congress and through it the nation. "I assure you", he added, "that I shall labour for the cause which the Congress has upheld all these years through our history as had other members of my family in the past."

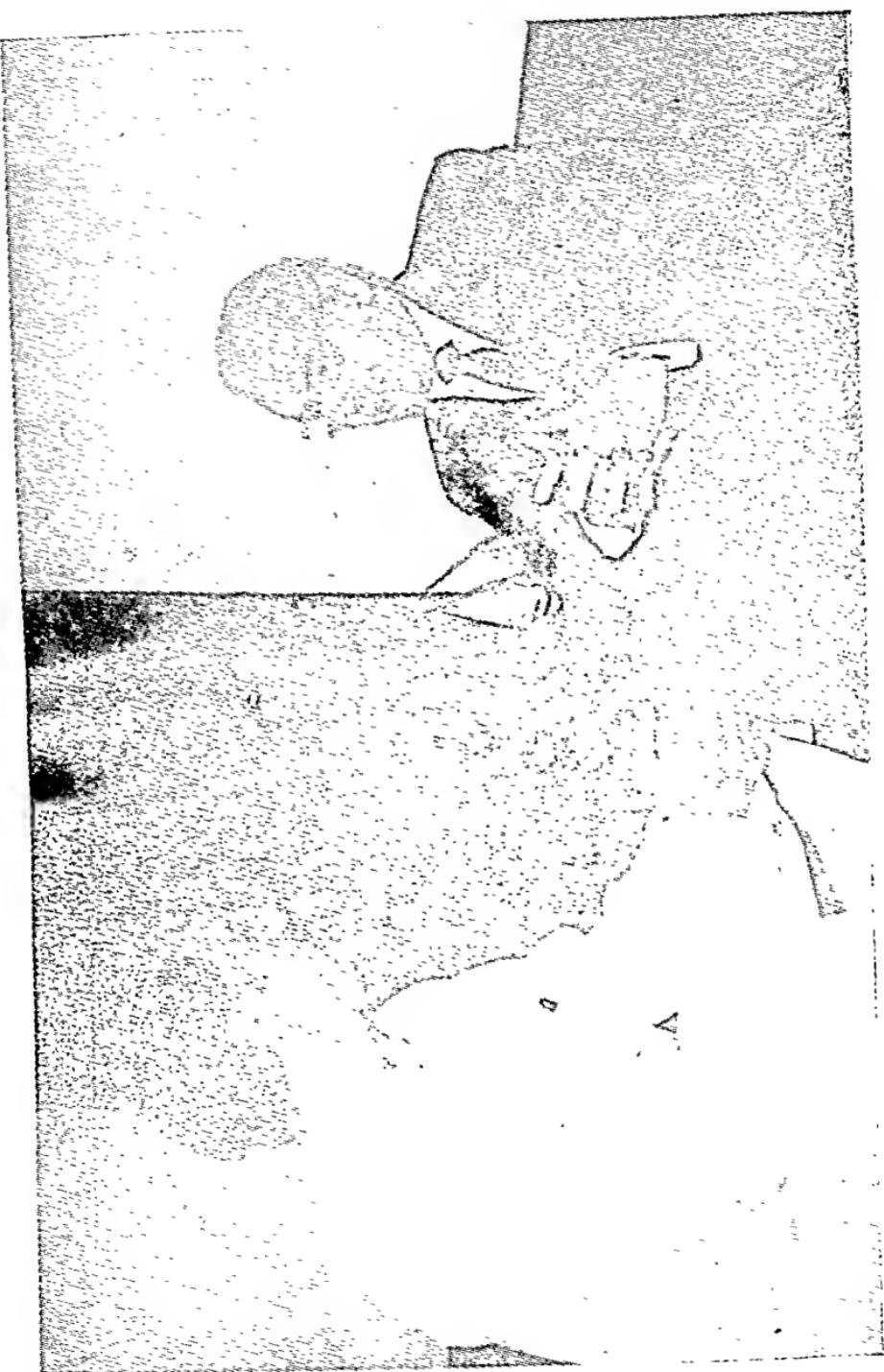
The first of the family on his mother's side to become president of the Congress was Mr. Motilal Nehru, who was first elected to the office in 1921 at the Amritsar Congress and for a second term at the Calcutta Congress in 1929 when Jawaharlal Nehru had served as one of his two general secretaries. Jawaharlal Nehru himself became the president of the Congress for the first time the very next year in 1930 at Lahore where the Independence of India Resolution was passed under his stewardship. After that Nehru was elected Congress President as many as four times. Mrs. Indira Gandhi herself was elected the president of the Congress for the first time in 1959 and again after the second Congress split in 1978.

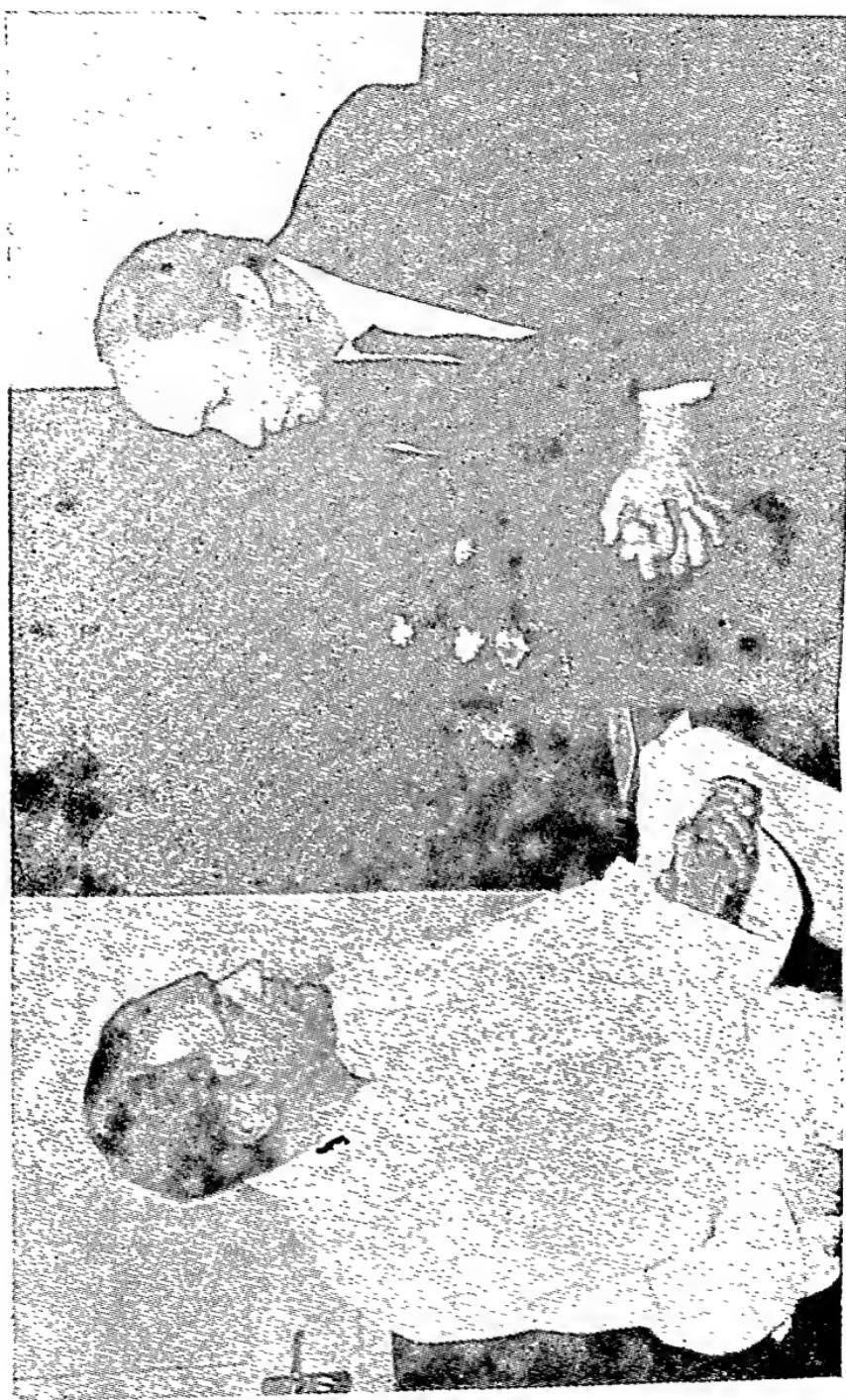
Representatives from different states gave reports on the political situation in their respective regions. A large number of state party chiefs spoke at the meeting.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was at the meeting for about 30 minutes.

Briefing newsmen, AICC (I) general secretary Chandulal Chandrakar said, there was no mention of elections in the

9. With U.N. Secretary General, Perez de Cueller on November 4, 1984.





10. With Laurent Fabius, the French Prime Minister, on November 4, 1984.



11. With Zia-ul-Haq, President of Pakistan.



12. With Yao Yi Lin, Prime Minister of China on November 4, 1984.



13. With L. Bahadur Chand, Prime Minister of Nepal on November 4, 1984.



14. With Ershad, Prime Minister of Bangladesh on November 4, 1984.



15. Consoling his son Rahul on November 5 1984.



16. - With Members of a Muslim delegation on November 10, 1984.

agenda. But most of the members suggested that elections to the Lok Sabha be held on schedule.

He said the present office bearers would continue till the appointment of a new Working Committee and Parliamentary Board.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's unanimous election as Congress (I) president was highlighted by major radio stations of the world in their news bulletins. The BBC, reporting it in its headlines, said the unanimous election had shown that there were no groups within the ruling party. The radio said Mr. Gandhi had now consolidated his position. The Australian Broadcasting Commission and Radio Pakistan also gave prominence to Mr. Gandhi's election.

Welcoming the decision, Congress (I) Chief Ministers, PCC (I) presidents and other functionaries and workers said, it would greatly help both the party and the Government in meeting the current situation in the country effectively. They expressed the view that Mr. Gandhi would provide dynamic, progressive, courageous and inspiring leadership.

A press release issued by the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party in New Delhi said, "We, the members of the executive committee of the Congress (I) parliamentary party wholeheartedly applaud the decision of the high command of the Working Committee of the Congress (I) party" to elect Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as the president of the Indian National Congress. This reflected the will of the people and the desire of the Congressmen in the country, the release added.

Maharashtra Chief Minister, Vasantdada Patil, welcomed the election saying this would help the organisation face the present situation "effectively".

In Calcutta WBPCC (I) general secretary Dr. Gopal Das Nag hailed the election of Mr. Gandhi as president of the Congress (I). Dr. Nag told PTI that as AICC(I) general secretary, Mr. Gandhi gave a definite shape towards cohesion, unity and discipline in the rank and file of the party. Now as Congress (I) chief a continuity would be maintained in strengthening the organisation, he said.

The election of Rajiv Gandhi as Congress President was very much appreciated by the media. *The Patriot* in its editorial commented :

"In the present difficult situation there was no other choice and the CWC (I) has acted in the best interests of the country and the party by electing Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Congress (I) president. Mr. Gandhi was understandably reluctant to accept this additional responsibility which he is carrying but we are passing through an extraordinarily critical period which is bound to make exacting demands on one who has been called upon to lead the country in the midst of a crisis. Normally, the choice of Congress (I) chief would be regarded as an internal affair of the party but not at this juncture when unity within the Congress (I) is essential for preserving the coherence of Indian polity. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is no other all-India infrastructure. On the right, Mr. Charan Singh's new outfit, the DMKP, is torn with internal dissensions even before it has come into existence in the Hindi belt beyond which it has no future at all. The BJP remains a party with a narrow communal base. The regional parties, by definition, have no all-India perspective and Janata, Congress-S etc. have reduced themselves to irrelevance in the current national context. Experience has shown that an unprincipled conglomeration of so-called opposition parties, even if it could be conjured up would be disastrous for stability. The Congress (I), therefore, is the only political force with an all-India network, and unity within its ranks is, therefore, crucial for safeguarding the coherence of our polity and stability of the system. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's election as Congress (I) Chief ensures that the party would remain unified during this period of transition.

"As party president and Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi will lead the Congress (I) in an electoral battle within a few weeks. The process of revamping the organisational structure which he initiated on his appointment as general secretary needs to be carried forward. His involvement in a series of conferences over the past year with party functionaries to evaluate the situation obtaining in parliamentary constituencies will prove to be extremely useful to Mr. Gandhi when party candidates are selected for the Lok Sabha poll. It is to be

hoped that Congressmen would realise that the people would not forgive them if they indulge in unseemly factionalism at a time when the nation expects them to contain their personal ambitions within reasonable limits. So far, Congress leaders, both old and young, have risen to the occasion and this, no doubt, should give to the new president confidence that the entire party would rally behind him in facing the challenges that lie ahead.

"Over the last one hundred years the Indian National Congress has turned out to be a unique political formation with commendable capacity to blend the process of continuity and change. This has given it durability and enabled it to serve the country by bringing divergent sections under one political umbrella. It is remarkable how old and veteran leaders of the party, in every phase of its history, have handed over the mantle of the party to the next generation : From Gokhale to Gandhi to Nehru to Indira Gandhi. By installing Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Congress president, Mr. Kamlapati Tripathi, the octogenarian veteran of the freedom movement, has acted in consonance with that historic tradition."

Left Front leaders are generally happy at the choice of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister by the Congress (I) leadership. They feel that Mr. Gandhi will continue his mother's foreign policy.

"It is a mature decision", a Front leader, who wanted to remain anonymous, said in Calcutta on Thursday, November 8, 1984. Mr. Gandhi, he admitted, was the symbol of national unity.

Asked if it was not a *vote* for the Leftists, he said, Mrs. Gandhi's assassination had given the Indian political scene a new dimension. It might open up the process of Right consolidation and stifle the rising voices of Left forces. The criticism of dynastic rule, about which the Leftists were once vociferous, is not thus likely to be repeated after this tragic incident.

Another Front leader said that although the assassins were Sikhs, the adroit planning behind the foul deed committed inside the Prime Minister's house clearly showed the presence of "a foreign agency" behind this incident.

He also admitted that the Congress (I) leadership might sway even the Hindi heartland of India if they could cash on the people's anguish at Mrs. Gandhi's assassination in its favour in the coming Lok Sabha election.

The Left Front at its meeting on November 8, 1984, regretted that some anti-social elements were trying to take advantage of the people's sorrow over the assassination and were out to upset life in the state.

The State CPI (M) secretary, Mr. Saroj Mukherjee, said Mrs. Gandhi had been assassinated by "terrorists backed by American imperialists". All sections of the people should mourn her death in a dignified manner. He regretted that some criminals were putting up road blocks and attacking members of a particular community. One could not pay homage to Mrs. Gandhi's memory by resorting to such violence.

According to *Northern India Patrika* :

"The election of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as President of the Congress (I) had not been in doubt for the past few days. The working president of the party, Mr. Kamlapati Tripathi, and one of the senior-most leaders, Mr. Y.B. Chavan, both had expressed themselves in favour of Mr. Gandhi holding the post of the party president also. Congress (I) Chief Ministers and presidents of state units of the party were of the same view, for they all held that in the present situation it was necessary for the party and the Government to work in complete unison. They also realised that Mr. Gandhi alone could hold the party and the Government together and ensure their cooperation. As a result, the transition in the party has been as it was in Government.

"Mr. Gandhi has lost no time in appointing a number of important bodies including the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Board. With the elections to be held soon, the formation of these bodies claimed the immediate attention of the new President.

"As a general secretary of the party, Mr. Gandhi had occasion to watch closely and direct the operation of the party for quite some time. His tours across the country as the party general secretary have also brought him in touch with the party leaders and workers even at the grassroots level. In fact,

it was he who was running the party, and the experience that he has gathered in the process will stand him in good stead as party President. The experience will be supplemented by the co-operation of elders that Mr. Tripathi promised him. With Mr. Gandhi's election, the leadership of the party, which will be 100 years old in a few months, passes to a new generation. But the new President has assured that he would try his best to maintain the great tradition of the party. The tradition is partly of his family also, for the family has given in four generations, four Presidents to the Congress Party."

In his first policy statement after assuming office the Prime Minister said that he would carry on the broad domestic and foreign policies of the Indira regime. However his main emphasis was on religious tolerance and communal harmony. Again in his speech on being elected Congress President Mr. Gandhi referred to the warning repeatedly given by the late Prime Minister against the threats to the country's unity and integrity and deplored that the opposition parties, instead of realising the gravity of the crisis, should have indulged in acts weakening the nation. The political overture is understandable, for he was speaking as head of the party. Most of the opposition parties had refused to take seriously the warning given by the late Prime Minister and had asked her to identify the forces of destabilisation and name the countries from which they were getting support, as if it was possible for her as Prime Minister of India to be so specific. The assassination was a stunning blow to the nation, but it has, as if in a final tribute to the departed leader, remained united and self-assured. It is good if the opposition parties wake up to the threat and agree to do their duty to the nation. If they do not come forward, the Congress will have to do it alone to frustrate the designs of the terrorists and enemies of the country's integrity for which a call was appropriately given by the new Congress (I) President, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

Maharashtra Chief Minister, Vasantdada Patil, welcomed the election of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as the President of the AICC (I). This would help the organisation face the present situation "effectively," he said.

Talking to reporters after a customary meeting with various Opposition group leaders at his official residence in Nagpur, Patil said that it was a good "augury" that a young person like Rajiv had succeeded Mrs. Gandhi as Prime Minister.

He said there was nothing wrong in a single person holding dual responsibilities. There would be less problems and conflicts and smoother co-ordination between the parliamentary wing and the organisation, he added.

He said the organisational chief should always go along with the party leader heading the Government. However, there was no need to club together the responsibilities of the governmental head and the organisational chief at State level.

Ashok Dhawad, general-secretary of the State Youth Congress (I), welcoming the decision of the CWC said, Rajiv would have the support of all sections in the organisation.

Wholeheartedly applauding Rajiv's election, the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party said, this reflected the will of the people and the desire of the Congressmen throughout the country.

The Punjab Congress (I) legislature party felt Rajiv's election would further strengthen the unity in the party. Extending its full support and cooperation, the party looked forward to a bright future under his able guidance.

Congress (I) Chief Ministers, party functionaries and several other leaders welcomed the election of Rajiv, saying it would enable both the party and Government to meet the present situation effectively.

They expressed the confidence that Rajiv would provide dynamic, progressive, courageous and inspiring leadership which would enable the nation to move faster on the path of progress.

Kerala Home Minister, Vayalar Ravi, said on November 12, 1984, that the unanimous choice of Rajiv as Congress (I) President and Prime Minister reaffirmed the party's confidence in his ability to lead the country in this hour of crisis.

Welcoming his election, Ravi said in a statement that Rajiv would be able to lead the party in "the best way". The Congress (I) was the bond of national strength and unity, he added.

The need of the hour was to maintain the country's unity and march forward with determination to achieve the ideals of Mrs. Gandhi, he said.

A New Start

When Rajiv was grounded three years back and brought into the political field, there was no indication that his apprenticeship would be so short. Mrs. Gandhi was looming on the political scene like a colossus. She was agile, active and brimming with the zest to serve the nation. She provided the nation the grit and the strength to face several problems. Any other person would have gone to pieces under the strain of the high office but Mrs. Gandhi was made of sterner stuff. She fought all divisive forces and did not flinch from decisions which exposed her to great risks. It was one such decision which led her into the line of the assassins' bullets.

It was in this moment of crisis that the mantle of the office fell on Rajiv.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, who was sworn in as Prime Minister on October 31, 1984, came into political limelight after the death of his younger brother, Sanjay, in an air crash in 1980.

Commercial pilot-turned politician, Mr. Gandhi has been general secretary of the Congress (I) since February 2, 1983.

Soft-spoken, affable and mild-mannered, Mr. Gandhi has endeared himself to many in and outside the party during his three years in politics.

The 40 year-old leader is the youngest Prime Minister of the country. Born on August 29, 1944, he spent his early childhood in the Prime Minister's house as the grandson of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India.

After the early education at the St. Columbus School, Delhi, he went to Doon School in Dehradun. Later, he proceeded to the UK for higher studies.

As a child, his ambition was to become a pilot. After receiving training at the Safdarjung Flying Club in New Delhi, he acquired a commercial pilot's licence and became a co-pilot in the Indian Airlines.

Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in as Prime Minister shortly before seven on the evening of October 31, 1984, in Ashoka Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan. The President, Giani Zail Singh, administered the oath of office.

Four Cabinet Ministers were sworn in along with Mr. Gandhi. They were Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Mr. V. Narasimha Rao, Mr. Shiv Shankar and Mr. Buta Singh.

Immediately after the swearing-in ceremony the new Cabinet held a meeting to take a decision on the funeral arrangements for Mrs. Gandhi. The Congress (I) Parliamentary Board and the previous Cabinet had met earlier in the evening to decide who would head the new government.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's emotion-choked voice could barely be heard as he took the oath of secrecy in English. After being sworn in he went back to his seat in the front row next to Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, while the Cabinet Ministers were being sworn in.

After an exceptionally grim swearing-in ceremony with the Cabinet Ministers and Mrs. Gandhi's top advisers holding back their tears and trying hard to remain expressionless, the President, for once without his red rose in his *achkan*, called Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and hugged him. The new Prime Minister bent his head and closed his eyes gulping while he did so.

Briefing the press on October 31, 1984, Mr. Sharda Prasad, press secretary to the Prime Minister, said the Cabinet passed a condolence resolution immediately after the swearing-in ceremony in which it made an impassioned appeal to the entire nation to maintain peace, communal harmony and unity.

Mr. Sharda Prasad clarified that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in as Prime Minister and not as "interim" or "acting" Prime Minister. The concept of interim Prime Minister, he said, did not exist in the constitution.

It was the pressure of time that had narrowed the immediate selection of Cabinet Ministers to five including the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's first broadcast to the nation was scheduled at 10.30 p.m., but was delayed because of the confusion and pressure of events. The official explanation was that the delay was due to a pre-recording.

The three-minute speech was made first in Hindi and then in English.

The new Prime Minister asked the nation to give him the support and blessings to complete the unfinished work of his mother. A lot was left to be done to fulfil Mrs. Gandhi's dreams, he said.

The new Prime Minister asked the country to remain peaceful. "We should not let our emotions get the better of us" because a step in anger only leads to blunder. He appealed to the people to exercise maximum restraint.

Mr. Gandhi said, "Nothing would hurt the soul of our beloved Indira Gandhi more than the occurrence of violence in any part of the country." It was of prime importance that "at this moment every step we take is in the correct direction. Indira Gandhi is no more, but her soul lives. India lives. India is immortal. The spirit of India is immortal."

The nation, he was sure, would recognise its responsibility and shoulder the burden heroically and with determination.

He said, "Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister, has been assassinated. She was mother not only to me but to the whole nation. She served the Indian people to the last drop of her blood."

"The country knows with what tireless dedication she toiled for the development of India. You all know how dear to her heart was the dream of a united, peaceful and prosperous India. An India in which all Indians, irrespective of religion, language or political persuasion, could live together as one big family in an atmosphere free from mutual rivalries and prejudices. By

her untimely death, her work remains unfinished. It is for us to complete her task."

At its first meeting under the new Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the Union Cabinet on October, 31, 1984, offered its respectful tribute to the memory of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and pledged itself to continue the great work of nation-building, carried on by her till the last moment. It called upon the people to maintain peace, communal harmony and unity.

The resolution said : "This meeting of the Council of Ministers places on record its profound sense of grief at the tragic death of the nation's great leader and Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi.

"The entire nation feels orphaned at the loss of this indefatigable fighter for the country's integrity and unity. The non-aligned movement has lost a great steward and the world, a great statesman. She led the nation through the most difficult years of crisis and external aggression and built up a united and economically strong nation which has become a model of self-reliance.

"While offering our respectful tribute to the memory of our great departed leader we pledge ourselves to continue the great work of nation-building which she carried on till her last moment. Mrs. Indira Gandhi lived and died for the integrity and unity of India and we call upon the entire nation to maintain peace and communal harmony and unity."

The Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, and 15 national opposition party leaders on the night of November 1, 1984, made a joint appeal to people of all persuasions, particularly active political workers and public servants, to exert themselves to the utmost to restore sanity and harmony.

The following is the statement adopted at the meeting of Government and opposition leaders on November 1, 1984 :

"At a moment when the nation has suffered a grievous loss in the tragic death of Shrimati Indira Gandhi, we the representatives of the major political parties and the Government are deeply anguished at the senseless outbreak of violence in several parts of the country. From the very beginning the Sikhs have been an inseparable part of India, and the Sikh community has played a glorious role in the freedom struggle and

in the building up of Independent India. The blood of Sikhs and Hindus was mingled on the heroic soil of Jallianwala Bagh. To subject Sikhs as a whole to violence and indignity for what a few misguided persons have done, however heinous their crime, is most irrational and unbecoming of our heritage of tolerance. This madness must stop. We appeal to people of all persuasions, particularly the active political workers and public servants, to exert themselves to the utmost to restore sanity and harmony. The world's eyes are on India. India must come out of this test with credit. The nation's unity and integrity must be safeguarded at all costs and this is the foremost responsibility of every citizen." The participants were : Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Buta Singh, Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram, Sharad Pawar, C. Rajeshwar Rao, K.P. Unnikrishnan, Tridib Chowdhry, L.K. Advani, Ram Jethmalani, H.N. Bahuguna, Chandra Shekhar, Chitta Basu, Chanderjit Yadav, Inderjit Gupta, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Mr. Samar Mukherjee.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's call to the Opposition to help remove fear, apprehension and distrust among different sections of society was significant and timely and was appreciated by the media. *The National Herald* in its editorial said : "With the announcement of several measures to expedite relief and rehabilitation of the riot-hit people, the role of political parties in total restoration of peace assumes importance. Mr. Gandhi stressed this point at his meeting with Opposition leaders on Tuesday, November, 6 1984 as the tendency is to go by hearsay accounts which are either distorted, coloured or grossly exaggerated. What led to disturbances following the assassination of Indira Gandhi and what happened earlier in certain parts of the country calls for heart-searching. Mrs. Gandhi had repeatedly cautioned the people against destabilising forces threatening the unity of the country. The cult of hatred and violence, whipped up in the past few years, has done the gravest harm to the country.

"In a democracy, the Opposition has every right to put forward its viewpoint but, at the same time, it should understand and appreciate the gravity of the situation and strengthen the government's hands in the larger national interest. Mr. Gandhi's

appeal to bring people together on the occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti and promote harmony is equally noteworthy. Nanak symbolised certain virtues and the sermons he gave to the people in his days provided a healing touch with a dramatic effect. His life was a mission of good-will for all and universal brotherhood, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. This is what is needed most not in India alone, but throughout the world.

"Mr. Gandhi's assurance that topmost priority will be given to the riot victims and no effort will be spared in carrying out 'operation relief' should leave no doubt about the administration's sincere effort to restore complete normalcy. Vigilance has been tightened and no untoward incident could take place in the last two days because of the gearing up of the law-enforcing agencies. The Government and the Reserve Bank have announced liberal financial assistance. But money alone cannot fully rehabilitate the uprooted people. They need love, human understanding and dedicated care. If citizens from all communities come forward to cooperate in building bridges of good-will, true Indianess will once again assert itself. This is the only way to fight divisive, separatist and parochial tendencies."

Amid the reports of violence pouring in from the different parts of the country, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi warned that as Prime Minister of India he "cannot and will not allow" communal madness to destroy all that the nation stands for.

Mr. Gandhi said this in a two-minute unscheduled broadcast to the nation on Friday, November 2, 1984, evening reacting sternly to "disgraceful incidents of arson, loot and murder" in different parts of the country, in the last two days.

The following is the text of the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's broadcast to the nation :

"It is with heavy heart that I speak to you this evening. While hundreds of millions of Indians are mourning the tragic loss of their beloved leader, some people are casting a slur on her memory by indulging in acts of hatred and violence. Disgraceful incidents of arson, loot and murder have taken place. This must stop forthwith. The Government will ensure the

safety of life and property of every citizen irrespective of his caste, creed or religion.

"Indira Gandhi gave her life so that a united India should live and prosper. Anything that creates a division between brother and brother comes in the way of national unity. This violence is only helping the subversive forces to achieve their ends.

"Communal madness will destroy us. It will destroy everything India stands for. As Prime Minister of India I cannot and will not allow this.

"Tomorrow the mortal remains of Indira Gandhi will be consigned to sacred flames. She had said, 'Do not shed blood, shed hatred'. Let this guide us."

About this speech *Patriot* commented in an editorial : "Last night Rajiv Gandhi addressed the nation. This was more than the first broadcast of a new Prime Minister. His was the voice of young India : India of the future. Dignified and composed. 'She was mother not only to me, but the whole nation,' Rajiv said. These were simple words but the emotion they coveyed were deep and stirring, They touched the hearts of countrymen and women. He was in control of himself and wasted no time in underlining the most important task before the people; preserve communal harmony and do not let emotions get the better of you. Here was the young leader, bereaved and in anguish, in complete command of himself. And that is why his fervent appeal for peace will strike a responsive chord. Congress (I) party has done the nation a signal service by selecting Rajiv Gandhi as its new leader. Any other choice at this critical juncture would not have been in the interest of the country. Rajiv Gandhi's appointment as the new Prime Minister is the first concrete step to foil the sinister designs of India's enemies. Those who had planned to create confusion during the void created by Indira Gandhi's assassination have been administered a rebuff. India is not without a leader and India cannot be pushed away from the path she has charted for herself.

"But this is only the beginning of a new phase in our battle to safeguard the independence, unity and integrity of our country. This is only the first step in our renewed fight against

imperialism's diabolical conspiracy against India. Let us not forget that those who conspired to kill Indira Gandhi have also worked out their future plans. The battle must now be waged to frustrate these plans. Indian people must fully grasp the nature of forces which committed the dastardly crime of hatching a plot to assassinate Indira Gandhi. They must understand the reason why removal of Indira Gandhi was so desperately wanted by fissiparous and divisive forces within the country and patrons outside. Only such an understanding will enable them to acquire the insight and the necessary strength to defeat these conspirators. Indira Gandhi became the target of these evil forces because she would never mortgage India's independence. Imperialism was hell-bent to remove Indira Gandhi from the scene because she was unflinching in her opposition to neo-imperialist machinations, unwavering in her support to national liberation struggles, dogged in her opposition to war and consistent in her policy of peace. Indira Gandhi was friend of the forces of progress and socialism all over the world. Reactionaries and enemies of socialism, therefore, had to strike and remove her from the scene. In the global struggle for economic justice, equality and fairplay, Indira Gandhi had given a remarkable leadership to the havenot-nations. Those who derive their affluence from the exploitation of poor nations wanted to remove her from the scene. In 1977, they had hoped she had been politically liquidated for ever. In 1980, the Indian people administered them a rebuff. Their hope that one electoral reverse will make Indira Gandhi a pliable tool was dashed to the ground when after her return at the helm she stuck to her convictions. Her principled positions made them angry and vengeful. If India could be deprived of Indira Gandhi's leadership by electoral means our enemies would have waited for a few months. But it became clearer with every passing day that that was not likely to happen and this realisation made them desperate. If India had continued for another five years to move on her charted course under Indira Gandhi's leadership, the country would have become a force to reckon with. An economically developed and politically united and strong India was potentially a threat to

imperialism's sinister global game plan. Hence the deadly dastardly attack against Indira Gandhi, against India.

"It is now necessary to defeat this game. The country can do so by persisting in the course she has charted by following unflinchingly the policies India has pursued so far. To do so, Rajiv Gandhi needs the nation's support. He needs the support of all those who are not conscious or unconscious tools of imperialism and reaction. If the people's response so far is any guide, Rajiv Gandhi will get in this task the nation's support in abundant measure. The challenges facing the country are not an individual's responsibility. These are not party tasks, these are national tasks. In historical struggles, nations and peoples enter phases when an individual becomes a critical element in determining the course of events. In today's situation Rajiv Gandhi has become that single factor in this nation's struggle to assert its independence and safeguard its integrity. The enemy is watching closely, assessing if this is the time for a further strike. To defeat India's enemies, to frustrate imperialist designs, all patriotic men and women will stand with Rajiv Gandhi."

Mr. Gandhi appealed to the Congressmen and party workers to go out to the fields and work for the welfare of the poorer sections of the society. The Prime Minister advised the Chief Ministers, who were in the capital in connection with Mrs. Gandhi's assassination, to go back immediately to their respective states and keep "a watch on the law and order situation."

Acting on this advice, the Maharashtra Chief Minister, Mr. Vasantrao Patil, flew to Bombay on October 31, 1984, night. Prior to his departure, he had a brief meeting with Mr. Gandhi. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Narain Dutt Tiwari, also left for Luknow on October 31, 1984, night. The Bihar and Madhya Pradesh Chief Ministers left for their respective states on November 1, 1984.

Mr. Gandhi has also asked the PCC (I) presidents, MPs and MLAs to rush to their respective areas and put a halt to violence.

Mr. Chandulal Chandrakar, AICC (I) general secretary, said on November 1, 1984, that Mr. Gandhi's first task after being

sworn in as the Prime Minister, was to direct the MPs, MLAs and PCC (I) functionaries to make all-out efforts to stop the outbreak of disturbances. Mr. Chandrakar said that the AICC (I) was also getting the feedback on the situation in the states.

Mr. Gandhi had also alerted the Chief of Army staff, Gen. A.S. Vaidya, to provide any help that might be necessary to ensure peace and communal harmony.

Prime Minister found time to visit the riot-affected areas on November 1, 1984, even when the late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was lying in state and the new Prime Minister had to attend to scores of foreign dignitaries.

PM's visit to riot-hit areas was appreciated by many.

The Prime Minister, on November 2, 1984, described the communal frenzy sweeping the country following the assassination of Indira Gandhi as "disgraceful".

He assured the people that the Government would safeguard the life and property of every citizen, irrespective of his caste, creed and religion.

The Prime Minister issued strict instructions to the authorities all over the country to put an immediate end to the spate of violence in different parts of the country in the wake of the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He instructed that such incidents should not be allowed to continue at any cost and they should adopt whatever means necessary for it including seeking the help of army wherever necessary.

The Prime Minister remained constantly in touch with the authorities throughout the day, giving instructions about the steps to be taken to tackle the situation. The control room set up here was receiving regular reports from all states about the situation and the same were being passed on to Mr. Gandhi for scrutiny.

The Prime Minister on November 1, 1984, condemned the violent incidents that had occurred in the capital and other parts of the country following the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi as "an affront to everything that she stood for."

Making a fervent appeal to work for the restoration of harmony and trust, the Prime Minister warned that such violence would weaken the nation.



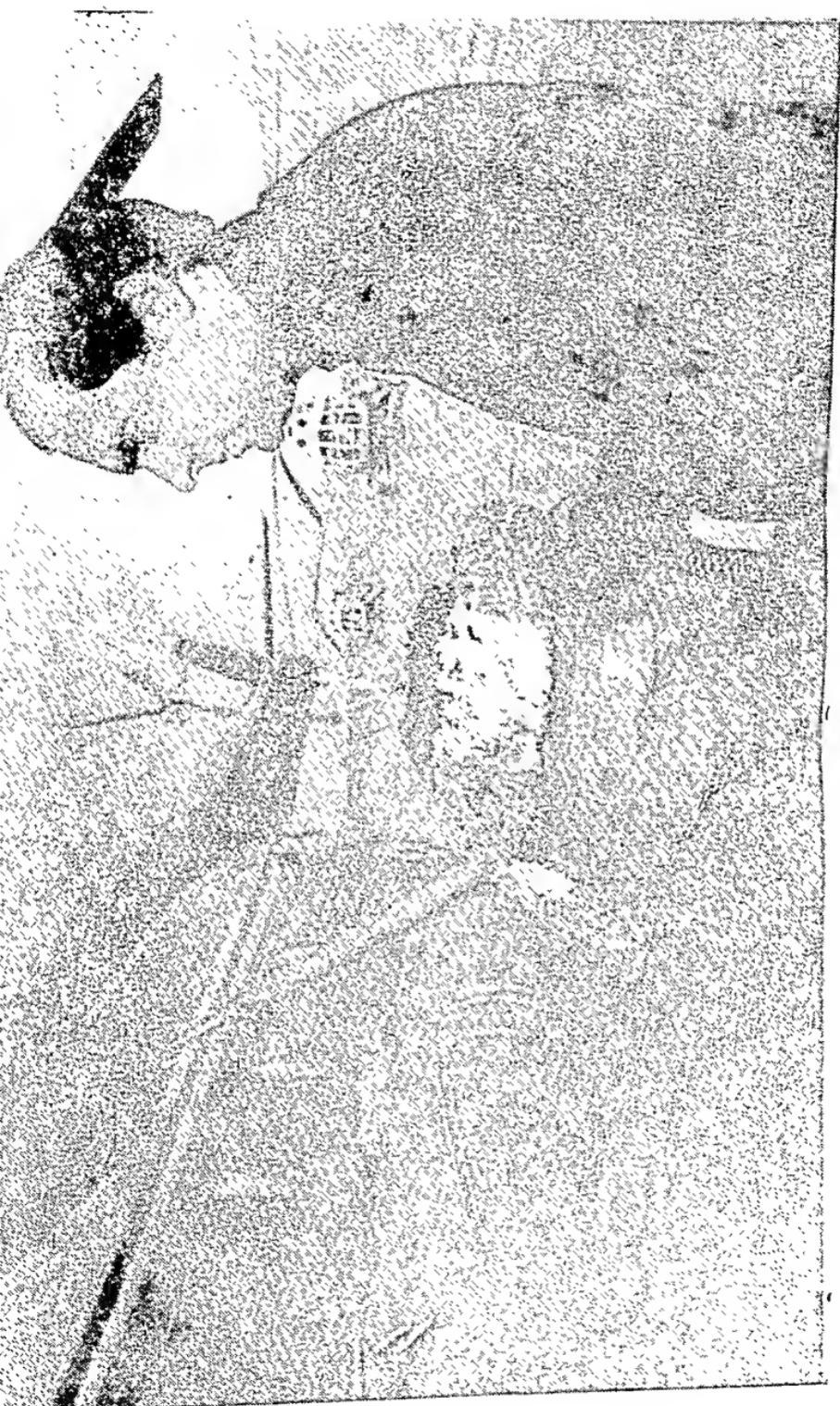
17. With Officers of Central Information Service on November 10, 1984.



18. With Members of Punjab Legislative Assembly, on November 10, 1984.



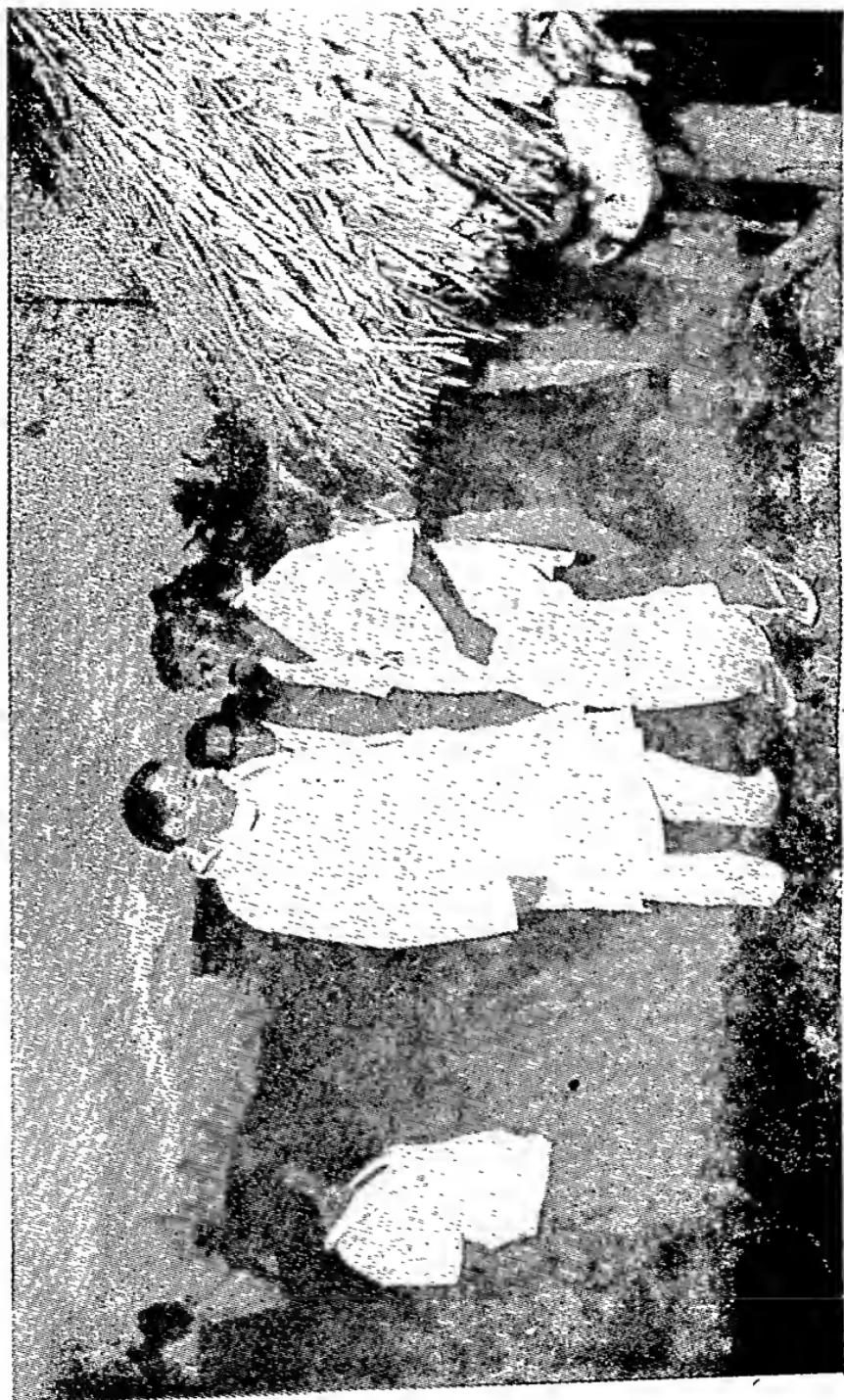
19. Offering prayers at Hindon Airport before taking urns for spraying over the Himalayas the ashes of late Indira Gandhi on November 11, 1984.



20. The ashes of late Indira Gandhi were scattered over the Himalayas on November 11, 1984. Rajiv Gandhi carrying the urn to the helicopter for being carried to Hindon Airport for the purpose.



21. Offering flower tributes to the memory of Jawahar Lal Nehru at Shantivan on November 14, 1984



22. Being briefed about the extensive damage caused in the cyclone which hit vast areas in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, on November 16, 1984.



23. Visiting relief camp for cyclone hit victims at Vyasar Paddi in Tamil Nadu on November 16, 1984.

24. Making an aerial survey of the cyclone hit areas of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu on November 16, 1984



The appeal addressed to all Congressmen urged each of them, particularly members of the Youth Congress and the students wing, to combat communalism, violence and hooliganism.

"If we shirk this duty, the future will not forgive us," he said.

The following is the text of the Prime Minister's appeal :

"We have lost Indira Gandhi's presence. But her message will always guide us. What is that message ? The nation's unity, the country's strength and progress, and harmony among all sections of the people and relentless efforts and courage in the defence of secularism and freedom. It is the lesson she imbibed from Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru which she passed on to us.

"It is this lesson that has held the Congress together and made it to be country's main political instrument, but the incidents that have occurred in Delhi and elsewhere since Indira Gandhi's assassination are an affront to everything that she stood for.

"Such violence will weaken us at a moment when we need all our strength. It will only help those who do not wish to see a strong and prosperous India.

"As members of the Congress it is your responsibility to put a stop to violence everywhere and to work for the restoration of harmony and trust.

"I appeal to each of you, Youth Congress and NSUI, to take the lead in combating communalism, violence and hooliganism.

"If we shirk this duty, the future will not forgive us".

The Prime Minister, made the following broadcast to the nation on October 31, 1984 :

"Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister, has been assassinated. She was mother not only to me but to the whole nation. She served the Indian people to the last drop of her blood. The country knows with what tireless dedication she toiled for the development of India. You all know how dear to her heart was the dream of a united, peaceful and prosperous India. An India in which all Indians, irrespective of their religion, language or political persuasion live together as one big family in an atmosphere free from mutual rivalries and prejudices. By her

untimely death her work remains unfinished. It is for us to complete this task.

"This is a moment of profound grief. The foremost need now is to maintain our balance. We can and must face this tragic ordeal with fortitude, courage and wisdom. We should remain calm and exercise the maximum restraint. We should not let our emotions get the better of us, because passion would cloud judgement. Nothing would hurt the soul of our beloved Indira Gandhi more than the occurrence of violence in any part of the country. It is of prime importance at this moment that every step we take is in the correct direction.

"Indira Gandhi is no more but her soul lives. India lives. India is immortal. The spirit of India is immortal. I know that the nation will recognise its responsibilities, and that we shall shoulder the burden heroically and with determination.

"The nation has placed a great responsibility on me by asking me to head the government. I shall be able to fulfil it only with your support and cooperation. I shall value your guidance in upholding the unity, integrity and honour of the country."

Even in the midst of the funeral arrangements for Indira Gandhi he did not allow his personal grief to come in the way of his attending to matters of the state, especially those relating to law and order and foreign affairs.

Restoration of normalcy was at that moment Mr. Gandhi's main concern. On Saturday, November 3, 1984, he issued fresh instructions to the defence and the police authorities to deploy by the night enough security forces in the Capital to bring under control incidents of violence, arson and looting.

The Prime Minister, sacked Delhi's Lt. Governor P.G. Gavai on Saturday, November 3, 1984 night as the Centre took a series of important steps to combat the communal violence that burst into orgies of killings and arson in Bhogal, Mangolpuri and trans-Yamuna areas of the Capital, and in some towns of Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.

Home Secretary, M.M.K. Wali, was appointed Lt. Governor of Delhi and former BSF Director General Birbal Nath brought into the Home Ministry to take charge of the concerted police and army action that the Government had ordered to ensure

that the violence, which had claimed about 650 persons, ended forthwith.

Delhi, which had the shameful Trilokpuri incident on the first and second days of violence, saw another wave of mass killings in the resettlement colony of Mangolpuri and certain areas of the trans-Yamuna area. Many vehicles and property were destroyed in arson in Bhogal and some other areas, many of them in posh colonies.

A senior officer, Mr. V.K. Kapoor, who was till then general manager of DESU, was appointed Union Territory Home Secretary with responsibilities for coordinating the law and order operations in the city. His main job was liaison with the army which had so far been hampered in its task because the civilian machinery had been totally paralysed. Police Commissioner S.C. Tandon and several other senior officers were replaced soon after.

In Delhi, where the army had deployed armoured personnel carriers in the worst hit areas, and all other affected states, (the curfew was being strictly enforced. The curfew was relaxed during the day for the funeral of Mrs. Indira Gandhi but in the evening troops took up positions and stopped all movement.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi reviewed the law and order situation more than once in the day. Orders were issued to curb violence on trains and against passengers, and armed escorts were provided to each train that left the Capital.

The heavy crackdown had its impact. The steps taken in the previous two days had brought the situation under control in the 200 towns which remained under curfew. Thirtyeight of them were in MP, 30 in UP and 25 in Bihar.

Shoot-at-sight orders were in force in the whole of Haryana and in Rourkela and several other places which had been hit by violence on the first two days after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

A very encouraging sign was the response received by the peace committees that had been voluntarily formed in many areas of the affected towns, showing that despite agents provocateur goading mobs into violence, sanity and reason had touched the people.

Rajiv Gandhi's stern warning to the law and order maintaining authorities in the country and his appeal to the people to shun violence had a salutary effect as very few incidents of arson and killings were reported on and after November 3, 1984.

As the situation in the Capital was fast returning to normal following stern measures taken by the Union Government, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assured that relief and rehabilitation measures were being intensified in the areas affected by violence in the city.

The Political Affairs Committee of the Union Cabinet met at New Delhi on November 5, 1984, and reviewed the law and order situation in Delhi and other parts of the country. It also considered the relief measures being taken in the disturbed areas.

Mr. Gandhi spent virtually the whole day meeting people and discussing ways and means to restore normalcy fast and to chalk out measures to help those affected by the violence. He assured a nine-party delegation of the Opposition which met him on November 5, 1984, that every possible facility would be provided to those who were returning to their homes from relief camps. Those wishing to settle in new areas would also be given help.

The Prime Minister has since initiated a series of measures aimed at expediting the relief and rehabilitation measures to help the riot victims.

After a personal review of the relief and rehabilitation work in Delhi, the Prime Minister directed that all Ministries of the Central Government should fully participate along with the Delhi Administration in the organisation of these measures. A high-powered committee of secretaries was also constituted by Mr. Gandhi to co-ordinate the operations.

A committee of political leaders, comprising all the members of Parliament from the Union Territory, Union Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, Union Home Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, and Union Works and Housing Minister, Buta Singh, had also been set up by the Prime Minister.

Later in the evening details of the scheme being adopted by the administration were announced. An ex-gratia payment

of Rs. 10,000 will be given to next of the kin of those killed in riots.

The Lt. Governor put the death toll at 599. The figure included the three persons who were killed on November 4, 1984, in Central Delhi.

Every injured person would receive Rs. 2,000. Assistance to the tune of Rs. 10,000 would be given to the house owners whose houses had been completely damaged by the frenzy. The owners of substantially-damaged houses would be sanctioned assistance of Rs. 5,000 while partially damaged houses would be given Rs. 1,000. The administration would also supply cement at controlled rate to these people, Mr. Wali said.

As a rehabilitation measure in case of traders, transport operators and other engaged in various business activities, loans at concessional rate of interest would be made available.

Rajiv Gandhi had issued instructions that all religious places and educational institutions which suffered damage during the recent riots should be repaired at government cost.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said in New Delhi on November 5, that the entire Sikh community should not be condemned for the madness of two Sikhs who had assassinated Mrs. Indira Gandhi as part of a conspiracy.

He told a deputation of prominent Sikh leaders which called on him at New Delhi that all efforts should be made to maintain peace, sanity and communal harmony in the country which was sought to be disrupted by some anti-social elements during the violent incidents in the last few days, according to Jathedar Rachpal Singh, President, Akali Dal (Master Tara Singh group).

The Sikh leaders urged the Prime Minister to enhance the quantum of compensation announced for the victims of violence, looting and arson in different parts of the country. The victims should be given interest free loans from the banks and the rehabilitation of those rendered homeless should begin immediately, the Sikh leaders suggested.

The Prime Minister urged the people to be cautious of the subversive forces. He said the country had great regard for

Sikhs and recalled the freedom struggle. The Sikhs had also contributed to building the nation's economy.

Mr. Gandhi appealed to the Sikh leadership to give the right direction to the community.

The Prime Minister told Sikh industrialists who met him that speedy steps would be taken to rehabilitate those affected in the riots.

Two British newspapers praised the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's handling of the violence in Delhi following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination.

What had impressed the Western observers most was the firmness with which the new Prime Minister had dealt with the violence and that Punjab had remained calm.

Times newspaper in a front page despatch on November 12, 1984, from its New Delhi correspondent said the Prime Minister had moved the Army swiftly into action to restore order after the rioting and killing.

The Prime Minister on November 6, 1984, received several senior Opposition leaders who had gone to see him in connection with the administration's failure, first to protect the life of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and then to anticipate the orgy of violence in different parts of the country.

The Opposition leaders handed over to Mr. Gandhi a three-page memorandum making concrete suggestions to normalize the situation. The happenings since Mrs. Gandhi's assassination had posed a threat to the nation's unity and its basic values of secularism and socialism, they said.

They also accused certain Congress (I) activists of having fanned the flames of violence either by instigation or by intervention on behalf of hooligans who seemed to have done a death dance on the capital's streets and outlying residential colonies.

The leaders conveyed to the Prime Minister first-hand impressions of what they themselves had seen during their visits to many of the affected areas in the capital.

From reports received by them from other parts of the country it appeared that the violence "unleashed throughout the country has all the marks of deliberate planning by a central agency," they said. The situation in the country was grim, and

they wished to express their "sense of shame, shock and anguish over the heinous violence" throughout the country.

The delegation, which was led by Mr. Charan Singh, President of the Dalit Mazdoor Kisan party, included Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad (CPI-M), Mr. Rajeswara Rao (CP!), Mr. K.P. Unnikrishnan (Congress-S), Mr. Tridib Choudhary (RSP), Mr. Chandrajit Yadav (Janavadi), Mr. Jaipal Singh Kashyap (Sanjay Vichar Manch), Mr. D. Shastri (Forward Bloc), Mr. T.D. Satyanarayana Reddy (Telugu Desam), Mr. Bhim Singh (Panthers' party), and Mr. Karpoori Thakur (DMKP).

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi shared the Opposition leaders' anguish over the happenings of the past few days and told them that the administration had been fully geared to meet the challenge. He counselled them to keep the cool and join hands in tackling the situation.

"We must remove fear, apprehension and distrust," he told them.

The Government, he added, would consider resettling in new areas those who so desired. Others would be provided full protection and facilities to go back to their homes, he said.

Mr. Gandhi also assured the Opposition leaders that there would be no political interference in the police search for recovery of looted property.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on November 7, 1984, asked his senior party colleagues to probe into every allegation of Congress(I) workers' involvement in the violent incidents at some places following Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination.

He made it clear that firm action would be taken against those Congressmen whose conduct was unbecoming of the party's secular and non-violent traditions or who had not acted in conformity with the strictest norms.

He had also asked the general secretaries of his party to issue immediate instructions to the chiefs of state party units to co-operate actively in providing relief and ensuring rehabilitation to those affected by the riots.

The Prime Minister had a series of meetings on November 8, 1984, with senior officials at which the law and order situa-

tion in the country, particularly in the states which had witnessed violence following Mrs. Gandhi's death, was reviewed. He had telephonic talks with the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Bihar and Haryana and enquired of them how the work of rehabilitation of the riot-affected persons was proceeding.

He advised them to be on guard against the activities of disruptive forces which were out to create trouble with the object of bringing about the country's disintegration. He asked them that no chance should be taken with law and order and subversive and anti-social elements should be firmly put down.

Some of his party colleagues drew his attention to reports of widespread attacks on the houses and property of Congress (I) men. They pointed out that some Opposition parties guided by narrow considerations, were trying to put the blame for the violence on Congressmen and were trying to rouse the Sikhs against them.

The Prime Minister said that cases of harassment of Congress (I) men should be brought to his notice immediately so that steps to prevent the same could be taken. He wanted his partymen to take an active part in combating forces that had "fuelled a great part of the trouble" during the last few days. Rumour-mongering, which had contributed to aggravate tension, also needed to be effectively checked.

As directed by him, many Congressmen went round relief camps in Delhi to restore confidence among the inmates and to meet their needs. The party has supplied medicines worth Rs. 10 lakhs to various camps in the Capital. Officers at his residence were in touch round the clock with Lt. Governor's office to keep abreast of the latest situation in the Capital and to ensure speeding up of relief measures.

The Prime Minister has noted that as a result of the firm action taken, as also the deployment of the Army in the riot-affected areas, the situation throughout the country, particularly in the Capital, has been brought under control. However, authorities could not afford to relax their vigil which should be maintained till the situation was completely normal and the displaced persons were able to live in their homes in peace and security.

National Herald has commended the firm handling of law and order situation in the country. In its editorial entitled "Rajiv's Prompt Action" it said :

"Now that the mob frenzy has abated and tempers are cooling a sense of guilt and shame pervades the minds of right-thinking citizens. Therein lies the hope that passions causing criminal activities have been purged and the crusade to bring peace and harmony among all communities is underway. It is as much the task of the Hindus as it is of the Sikhs to see that the evil designs of the mischief-mongers are frustrated and they are prevented from sowing the seeds of hatred between the two communities. While the events of the past few days have exposed the ugly face of parochialism, there are distinct signs of hope now. From all over Delhi and other parts of the country reports are pouring in to show how Hindu neighbours stood by their Sikh friends and *vice versa* in their hour of need. As Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi pointed out on Monday, November 5, 1984 this sentiment must be reciprocated all over if the unity and integrity of the nation is to be preserved. Unfortunately, some religious leaders are still bent on their obstinate pursuit of insanity.

"What, however, strengthens our confidence in India's future is that our new Prime Minister has been able to handle the situation in remarkably efficient and prompt manner. Swift changes in Delhi Administration with the appointment of a new Lt. Governor and a Home Commissioner are the steps in the right direction. Mr. Gandhi's mobilisation of police and military forces to defuse tension and the "healing touch" with which he has tried to sooth the misery of the victims are a proof of his leadership potential. This baptism of fire and Rajiv's passing the test with flying colours should serve as a clear warning to all the forces attempting to destabilise the country. For short-term relief, Mr. Gandhi has organised two committees. The first, comprising secretaries, is to organise and implement relief measures. The second consisting of concerned Ministers is for follow-up measures and review of relief and rehabilitation work. The camps already set up have overcome initial problems and are now functioning reasonably efficiently. The Centre has already announced the quantum of cash relief

to the victims and held out the promise of loans at concessional rates for rebuilding the affected houses and resuming business activities.

"The quantum of relief may not be substantial, but it can only be a gesture of government's immediate concern. The long-term hope lies only in the way the right-thinking Hindus have come in the aid of their Sikh brothers. The peace committees are at work. While time alone can heal the psychological wounds, even the worst-affected people if they sit back and ponder dispassionately will realise that Hindus and Sikhs belong to the same culture and the same country. If the feeling of alienation has grown among them in the past couple of years it is largely because of the propaganda by a handful of disgruntled Sikhs who were out to use any and every opportunity to sow the seeds of hatred to serve their narrow political ends. It is time that the people of all communities realised that Indira Gandhi has sacrificed her life at the alter of secularism, unity and integrity of India and they must not do anything which might jeopardise these basic principles on which depend the country's development and progress."

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said on November 6, 1984, that the Indian people must work together to continue and complete the task which Indira Gandhi had left unfinished.

In a message to the people, the Prime Minister, said on November 7, 1984 :

"I thank you all for the sympathy you have shown me in such overflowing measure. You and I have suffered a loss which can never be made good. You and I must work together to continue and complete the tasks which Indira Gandhi left unfinished.

"Indira Gandhi died as she had lived: unafraid, with courage abiding. Her name and her work will remain deathless. Sacred books tell us that death is the gate to immortality. Yet the physical body ceases to be. It must be returned to the elements. There are different ways of doing so, and individuals often indicate what should be done with their body after they are no more. It is a son's duty to carry out the parent's wish.

"Indira Gandhi loved and venerated the Himalayas and drew strength from them. She regarded herself as a child of the mountains. Whenever she was asked where she wished to live, her answer was : high up in the snowy mountains. To others the steep path might be a trial. To her it was exhilarating.

"She said once : To us Indians, the Himalayas are not just a great mountain range. They are an inseparable part of the Indian consciousness, standing for eternal values. The magnificence and grandeur of the mountains, the imperturbable lofty peaks, help us to see ourselves and our concerns in perspective. How small, how insignificant we are and, for all our powers of destruction and creation, how helpless we are in the vastness of the universe ! And yet we are possessed of something special—an unconquerable soul. This is what enables men and women to bring the impossible into the realm of possibility.

"Indira Gandhi had desired that on her death her ashes should be scattered in the Himalayas. I shall later this week entrust the mortal remains of my mother to the care of this great Lord of the Snows. A portion of these will be strewn at Gangotri, which my mother described as the symbol of the earth's need for water. This sacred spot is the source of the Ganga, the River of India.

"With the scattering of her ashes in the Himalayas will end Indira Gandhi's earthly journey. But the nation's journey continues. Let us walk together, stout of heart and purpose, firm in step".

The Prime Minister on November 4, 1984, completed the process of Ministry-making by inducting nine more Cabinet Ministers, 21 Ministers of State and 11 Deputy Ministers. He retained all the Cabinet Ministers who had served with Mrs. Gandhi with the exception of Mr. P.C. Sethi.

The other changes introduced by the new Prime Minister were dropping of two Ministers of State, Mr. Kalpanath Rai and Mr. Ramchandra Rath, and elevation of Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai to the Cabinet rank. The lone new entrant in the Ministry is Mr. Nawal Kishore Sharma, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress (I) President and a member of the Lok Sabha, as Minister of State.

All the 40 Ministers were administered the oath of office by President Zail Singh at a simple ceremony held in Ashoka Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan on the afternoon of November 4, 1984. Those who attended the ceremony included Vice-President, R. Venkataraman, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and four Cabinet Ministers who had been sworn in earlier.

The ceremony was also attended by the Service Chiefs, diplomats and senior officials of the Government.

Mr. Gandhi had earlier inducted four Cabinet Ministers who had been administered oath along with him on November 1, 1984. They were Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, Mr. P. Shiv Shankar and Mr. Buta Singh. They were allotted the same portfolios that they had held in Mrs. Gandhi's Council of Ministers.

The Cabinet Ministers sworn in on November 4, 1984, were Mr. S.B. Chavan, Mr. A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhary, Mr. Jagannath Kaushal, Mr. Veerendra Patil, Mr. Vasant Sathe, Mr. Birendra Singh, Mr. K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai and Mr. B. Shankaranand.

Mr. Gandhi kept the External Affairs portfolio with him, just as Mrs. Gandhi had done.

All the Cabinet Ministers have retained the portfolios they had held in Mrs. Gandhi's Cabinet except that Mr. Narasimha Rao has been given an additional charge of Planning held previously by Mr. Sethi. Mr. C.K. Jaffar Sharief, who was Minister of State of Railways, has been given independent charge of Irrigation, the other portfolio Mr. Sethi was looking after. Only minor changes had been made in the portfolios of other members of the Council of Ministers.

After the exit of Mr. Sethi, Madhya Pradesh remains unrepresented in the Cabinet. Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai's elevation to the Cabinet rank gives U.P. another Cabinet Minister in addition to Mr. Gandhi himself. Mr. Kalpanath Rai as Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs had not shown much promise as an able Minister while Mr. Rath's departure appears to be the result of his constant criticism of the State Chief Minister even in the presence of Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Sharief's shifting to irrigation will end the feud with his senior colleague, Mr. Ghani Khan Chowdhary.

The expansion of the Cabinet to almost to its full strength on November 4, 1984, itself is an indication of the desire on the part of the new Government to end all uncertainties in this matter.

The following is the list of the Council of Ministers along with their respective portfolios.

Cabinet Ministers :

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi—Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs, Science and Technology, Space, Atomic Energy and Ocean Development, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee—Finance and Commerce, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao—Home Affairs with additional charge of Planning, Mr. P. Shiv Shankar—Energy, Mr. Buta Singh—Works and Housing, Parliamentary Affairs and Sports, Mr. S.B. Chavan—Defence.

Mr. A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhary—Railways, Mr. Vasant Sathe—Chemicals and Fertilizers, Mr. Birendra Singh—Agriculture, Mr. B. Shankaranand—Health and Family Welfare, Mr. K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy—Industry and Company Affairs, Mr. Jagannath Kaushal—Law and Justice, Mr. Veerendra Patil—Labour and Rehabilitation with additional charge of Shipping and Transport, Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai—Rural Development.

Ministers of State (independent charge).

Mr. Bhagwat Jha Azad (Food and Civil Supplies), Mr. H.K.L. Bhagat (Information & Broadcasting), Mr. V.N. Gadgil (Communications), Mrs. Shiela Kaul [(Education, Culture and Social Welfare) Mr. Khurshed Alam Khan (Tourism and Civil Aviation), Mr. N.K.P. Salve (Steel and Mines), and Mr. C.K. Jaffer Sharief (Irrigation).

Mr. Shivraj Patil (Science and Technology, Atomic Energy, Space), Mr. Ram Niwas Mirdha (External Affairs), Mr. A.A. Rahim (External Affairs), Mr. P. Venkatasubbaiah (Home Affairs), Mr. Dalbir Singh (Department of Coal), Mr. S.M. Krishna (Commerce), Mrs. Ram Dulari Sinha (Home Affairs), Mr. K.P. Singh Deo (Defence), Mr. Harinath Mishra (Planning) Mr. Dharmvir (Labour and Rehabilitation), Mr. Z.R. Ansari (Shipping and Transport), Mr. Yogendra Makwana (Agriculture), Mr. Pattabhi Rama Rao (Industry) and Mr. Gargi Shankar Mishra (Petroleum).

Mr. Nawal Kishore Sharma (Finance), Mr. Arif Mohammed Khan (Energy) and Mr. N.R. Laskar (Industry) were not present to take oath.

Deputy Ministers :

Dr. M.S. Sanjeevi Rao (Electronics), Mr. Digvijay Singh (Environment), Mr. Janardhana Poojary (Finance), Mr. P.A. Sangma (Commerce), Miss Kumud Joshi (Health and Family Welfare), Mr. Mallikarjun (Parliamentary Affairs), Md. Usman Arif (Works and Housing), Mr. Ashok Gehlot (Sports), Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad (Information & Broadcasting), Mr. Vijay Nawal Patil (Communications) and Mr. P. K. Thungon (Education).

The *Telegraph* in its editorial entitled "Opting for continuity" wrote :

"The only new face in Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet is Mr. Rajiv Gandhi himself. The other new face in the Council of Ministers is that of Mr. Nawal Kishore Sharma of Rajasthan who has been inducted as a Minister of State. He is a Congressman in the traditional mould and was active in the Congress Socialist Forum. The three members of Mrs. Gandhi's Council of Ministers who have been dropped are Mr. P.C. Sethi, Mr. Kalpanath Rai and Mr. R.C. Rath. No tears need be shed for their departure. Mr. Sethi and Mr. Rath have, perhaps, been punished as they belonged to groups opposed to the Chief Ministers of their states. The other change is Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai being promoted to full-fledged Cabinet rank. This perhaps suggests that Mr. Gandhi is sensitive to the problem of alienation of the minorities, particularly in the largest State of UP. This is welcome as far as it goes. The new Cabinet seems to indicate that Mr. Gandhi has, for the time being, opted for continuity. But it could be argued that this Cabinet does not carry his stamp as he is still too shocked to apply his mind to Cabinet formation. He may show his hand in next few days and more particularly after the elections, if the Congress (I) wins.

"The reins of the government have, however, passed onto another generation. It is a tradition with the Nehru family for

each member of it to chart out a course different from the one adopted by the preceding member. Jawaharlal Nehru was different from Motilal Nehru, Indira Gandhi was different from Jawaharlal Nehru and the same can be expected of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. Mrs. Gandhi, unlike her father, preferred to rely on a small circle of advisers and operatives to run her government. With time this group tended to get smaller. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has also shown a similar style in the last two years. He has relied on those with old school ties and a belief in modern management techniques. Conventional political instinct has not been their forte just as that has also not been his hallmark. He started taking a serious interest in politics only in 1980, after the death of his younger brother. Mrs. Gandhi's and her son's reliance on a few differs from Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership through consultation. Even when after the 1962 Chinese attack, the Opposition mounted an all-out offensive against him, he did not deviate from this course. Mr. Gandhi has begun well by taking the help of the Opposition in appealing to the nation for an end to communal strife. An implacable political foe like Mr. Jyoti Basu has responded handsomely. As Mr. Gandhi slowly settles down it will be worth watching whether he will adopt his mother's individualistic and combative style or his grandfather's way of rule by consensus."

In retaining in his Cabinet all the members of the outgoing one headed by his mother except one of the Cabinet rank and two others, the new Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, has acted wisely. If he were to make radical changes in the Council of Ministers, he would have incurred unnecessary displeasure of those who were not given berths in the new Cabinet.

It is not frightfully hard to explain the changes Mr. Gandhi has made. Mr. P. C. Sethi was not much of a success in Mrs. Gandhi's Ministry and had to be shunted from one department to another. On top of this, he had been interfering with the affairs of Madhya Pradesh to which he belonged. So was Mr. Rath with Orissa politics. Both had to be dropped to help the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa respectively. Short of power, they may not prove as much of a thorn in the flesh of Mr. Arjun Singh and Mr. J.B. Patnaik. Or, is it that

they will now feel free from the obligations of office and engage in doing maximum mischief? How exactly they will react, it is not possible to forecast right now. Mr. Kalpanath Rai is, however, a different case altogether. His loyalty was never in question. But his enthusiasm and impetuosity often caused embarrassment to the government. What will he do now? Will he submit to party discipline, will he walk out and join the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch or will he remain a member of the party and cause damage to the party from within? The last course hardly fits in with his character. Even so, one can never tell.

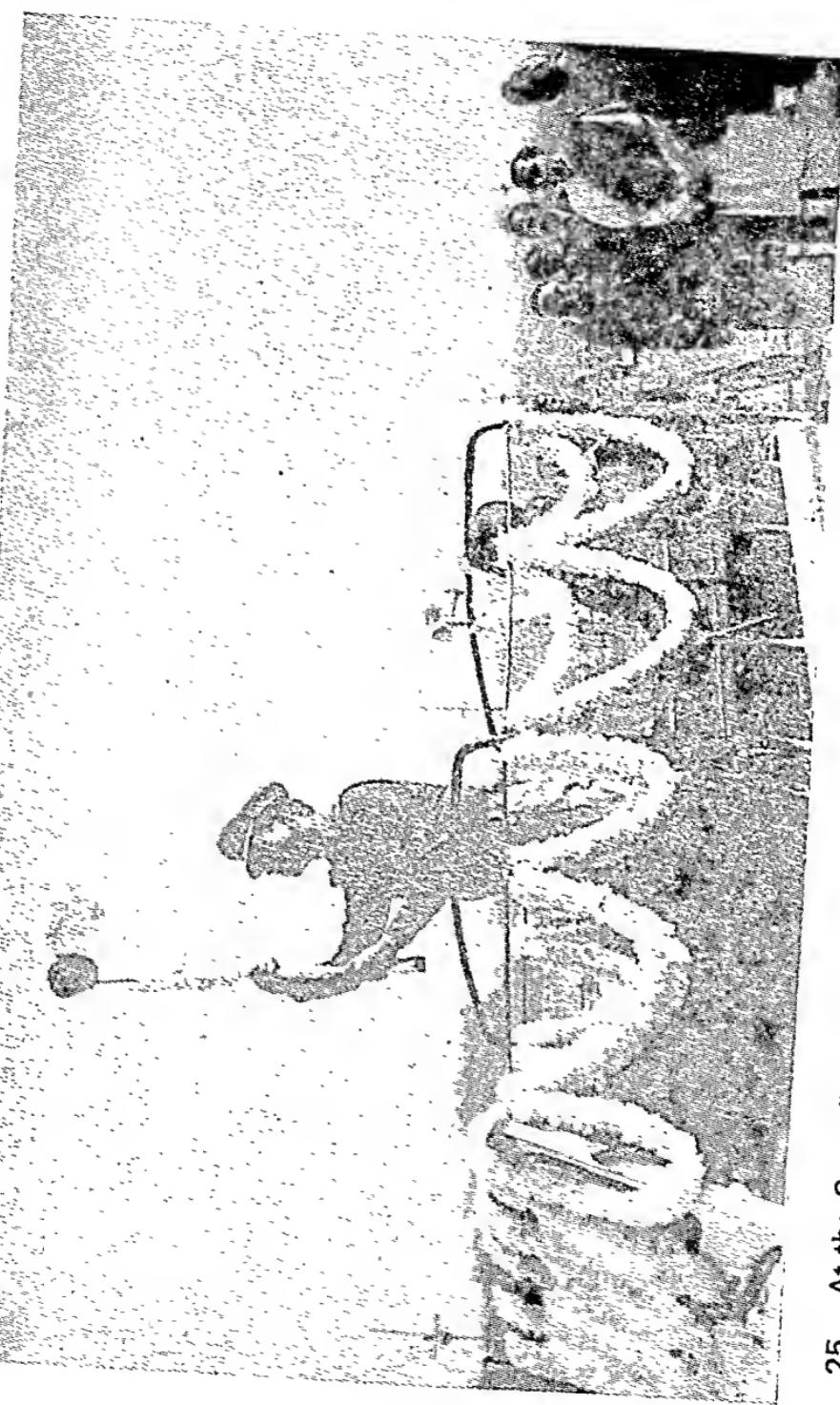
Most of the other changes in the Ministry are of a very minor character. Mr. C. K. Jaffar Sharief, who was not pulling on well with his chief, Mr. A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhary, has been shifted from the Railway Ministry to Irrigation where he holds independent charge; Mrs. Kidwai's elevation may be due as much to the importance attached to the department of rural development as to the need for giving more weight to the Muslims. Compared with these and other changes, the delinking of company affairs from law and justice and bringing it in the fold of industry is rather important. The reason well may be procedural compulsions; the change will quicken the pace of issue of industrial licences and is in line with Mrs. Gandhi's concept of single-window clearance for industrial projects.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on November 3, 1984, had a round of discussions on the non-aligned movement as its Chairman, a mantle that has fallen on him on Mrs. Gandhi's assassination.

Speaking to Yugoslav President, Vaseline Djuranovic, who called on him on November 3, Mr. Gandhi expressed his resolve to make the movement strong.

Referring to the bilateral Indo-Yugoslav relations, Mr. Djuranovic stressed the need to reinforce the traditional friendship between the two countries. Appreciating this sentiment, Mr. Gandhi assured him that India's efforts would be to cement Indo-Yugoslav ties.

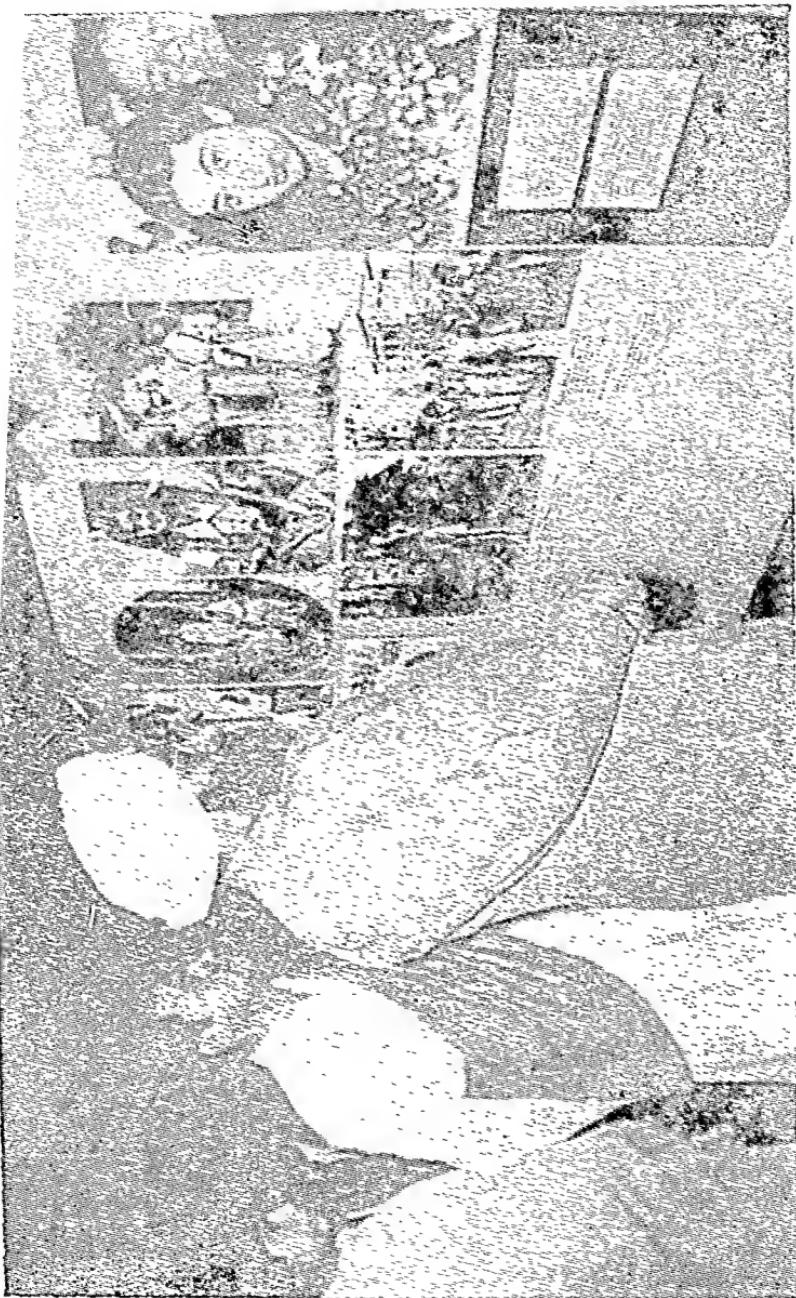
Mr. Djuranovic told Mr. Gandhi that his country would do everything to raise the level of co-operation between the two countries. He also suggested their constant contacts at the



25. At the Samadhi of Indira Gandhi when Indira Jyoti was lit on November 19, 1984.



26. Offering Prayers at the Samadhi of Indira Gandhi.



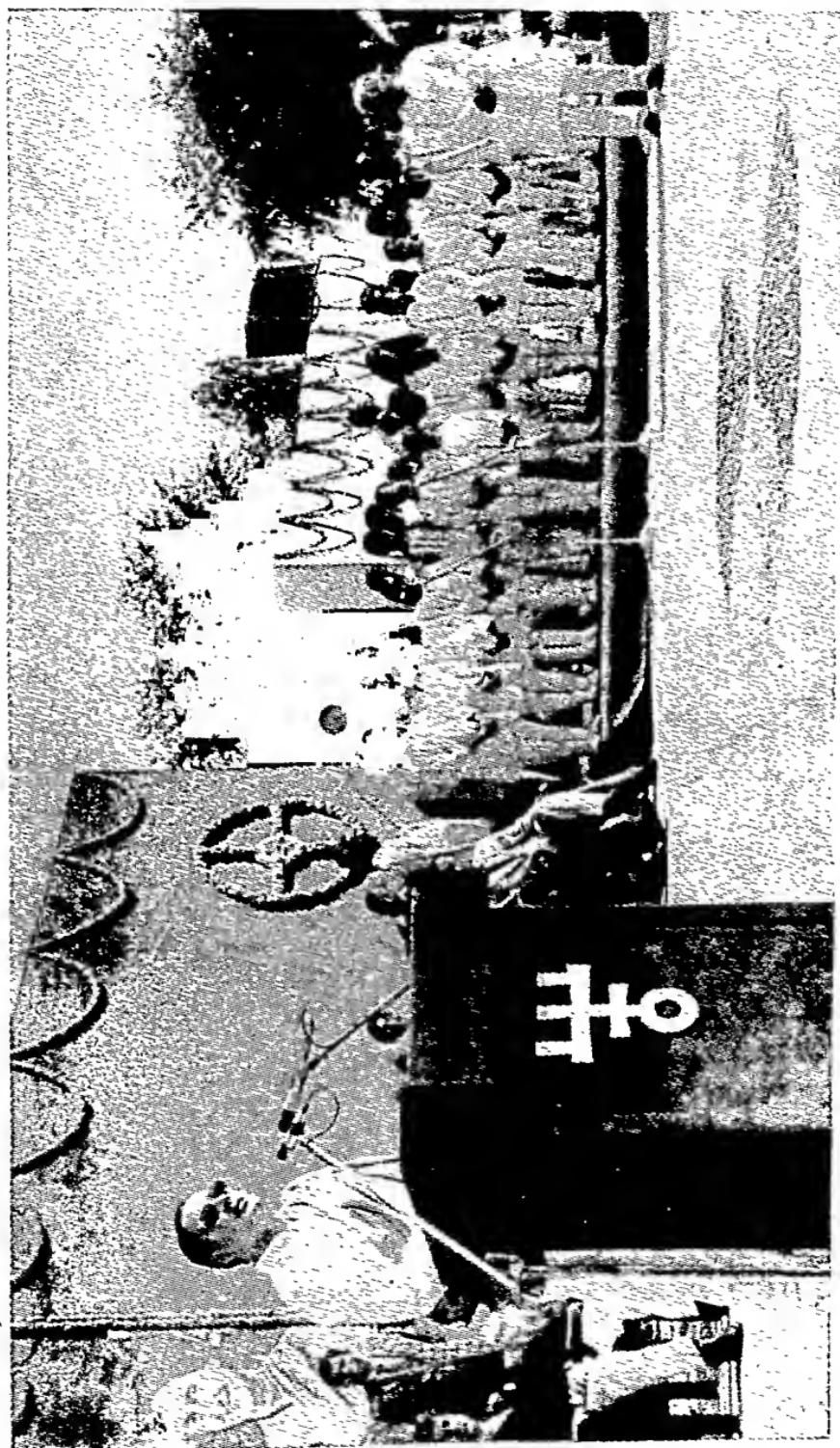
27. Going round the exhibition on Indira Gandhi at Teen Murti House on November 19, 1984.



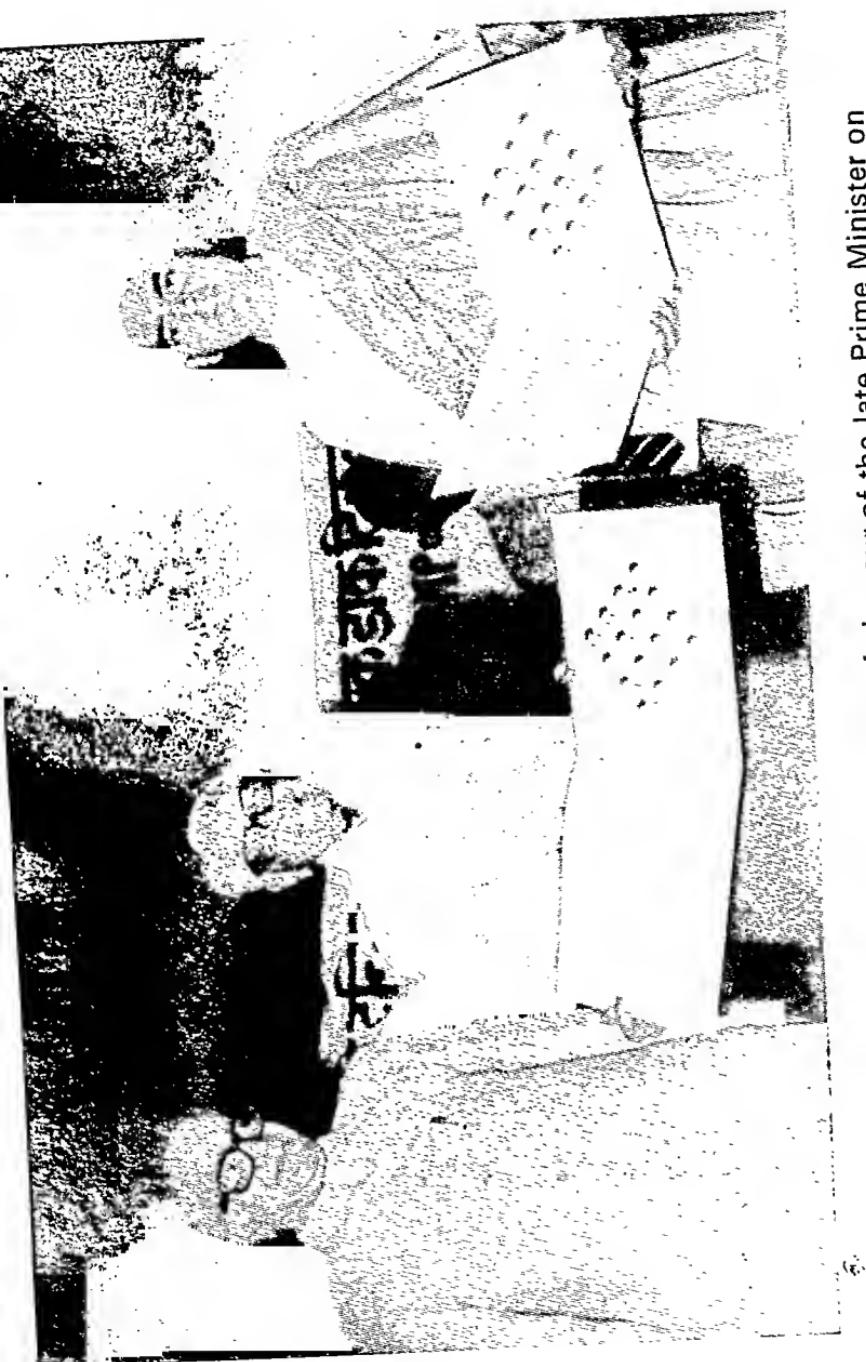
28. Addressing a public meeting at Boat Club, New Delhi, on November 19, 1984.



29. Rajiv Gandhi looks on while Sonia Gandhi plants a sapling at the Samadhi of Indira Gandhi.



30. Delivering the inaugural address at the opening of Appu Ghar at the India International Trade Fair on November, 19, 1984.



31. Releasing a commemorative stamp in honour of the late Prime Minister on
November 19, 1984.



32. With U Ne Win, Chairman of Bureau on November 21, 1984.

highest level were necessary and hoped that a meeting could be convened for this purpose.

The other NAM leaders who met Mr. Rajiv Gandhi included the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr. Aneerud Jagnauth, the President of Cyprus, Mr. Spyros Kyprianou, the President of Tanzania, Dr. Julius Nyerere, the Vice-President of Syria, Abdul Halim Khaddam and the Greek Prime Minister, Mr. A. Papandreu.

It is not only the Indians who have pinned hopes on Rajiv Gandhi, even NAM's hopes rest on him.

Several foreign dignitaries have urged Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to take appropriate follow-up action on the six-nation initiative to promote global peace and strive for nuclear disarmament.

They told Rajiv that the world entertained "high hopes" from him in this regard.

Mrs. Gandhi, joined by leaders of five other nations, had earlier this year, issued an appeal to nuclear powers to reduce their nuclear stockpile and stop all testing of nuclear weapons as a first step towards disarmament.

They spoke in glowing terms about Mrs. Gandhi's tremendous contribution to strengthening the non-aligned movement and the forceful manner in which she presented the case of the Third World at the Cancun Summit.

These leaders, who attended the funeral of Mrs. Gandhi, also felt that Rajiv Gandhi should draw up plans aimed at an early north-south dialogue for the overall good of humankind, especially developing nations.

Most of these leaders met Rajiv late in the night of November 2, 1984, after the funeral of Mrs. Gandhi.

Greek Prime Minister A. Papandreu felt Rajiv, in his capacity as chairman of the non-aligned movement, should take appropriate action soon on the appeal made by India, Greece, Sweden, Mexico, Argentina and Tanzania.

Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere, also referred to the six-nation appeal and is understood to have discussed the matter with Papandreu.

Nyerere suggested that Rajiv chalk out an action plan on the recommendation of NAM's five-member expert group for

an international conference on money and finance with universal participation.

Nyerere told Rajiv in an emotional vein, "We cannot help you but we pray for you."

Mozambique President, Samora Machel, described Mrs. Gandhi as a world leader who was profoundly humane. The tragedy has shocked everyone, he said. He gave Mrs. Gandhi the credit for rescuing NAM at a critical juncture.

Cyprus President Spyros Kyprianou expressed his sympathy and condolences on the death of Mrs. Gandhi and spoke of the friendly ties between the two countries.

Rajiv thanked all the leaders for their kind gesture and reaffirmed India's commitment to NAM which formed a part of the larger battle for a more peaceful world and a better deal to all developing nations.

Syria's Vice-President, Abdul Halim Khaddam, recalled the traditional links between the two countries and thanked India for its unstinted support to the Arab cause.

French Prime Minister, L. Fabius, who had a meeting with Rajiv on November 3, 1984, said President Francois Mitterrand had the highest personal regard for Mrs. Gandhi. Mrs. Gandhi on her part, Fabius observed, had a personal attachment to France.

Rajiv Gandhi drew the attention of the non-aligned world to the deteriorating situation in Nicaragua. Mr. Gandhi has acted in true Indira spirit by calling an emergency meeting of the NAM bureau in New York to discuss the threat to the sovereignty of Nicaragua, an important member of the non-aligned movement. The situation in the Latin American country is reaching a boiling point with reports of a possible "Grenada-type" operation by the US to pre-empt Nicaragua from acquiring arms to defend itself. That the US and other Western press have been openly talking of a blockade or an outright invasion of Nicaragua shows the cavalier manner in which sovereignty of smaller countries is treated by certain major powers whose perceptions and geo-political strategies are based on the theory of "areas of influence". If the US is feeling harassed by the attitude of the Nicaraguan government it is understandable, though not acceptable. But the US must

realise that it is guilty of encouraging its so-called allies elsewhere to create conditions of tension and war-like situations.

Mrs. Gandhi had often said that peace is indivisible and that threat to peace at one place could pose danger to tranquility all over the world. If certain powers are thinking that they would play with the sovereignty and integrity of countries far away from their shores to keep off conflicts, they are totally mistaken. If certain moves are being made today in some areas these are reactions to steps taken by others in the past. When President Reagan was re-elected there was widespread concern that if he continued to be aggressive in his second term too world peace could be threatened. It is here the non-aligned movement has an important role to play by counselling restraint on the part of forces which seem to be moving ominously towards a point of confrontation. Nicaragua is a test to all peace-loving nations, and the small Latin American country deserves support of the silent majority of countries which want peace. As the Indian government has rightly said, the only way to solve the problem on hand is to pursue the Cantadora process of negotiations. It would be unwise to trust in gun-boat strategies. As the relentless champion of peace India must raise its voice as Mr. Gandhi has done. As the NAM chairman he must pursue the peace initiative he has taken.

Rajiv Gandhi is basically a man of peace and wants to develop friendly relations with neighbours. On November 3, 1984, he assured Pakistan President, General Zia-ul-Haq, that India was "certainly not in competition" with Pakistan and that India's concern was for development for which there was need for peace in the region and in the world.

Mr. Gandhi held out this assurance when General Zia called on him at his residence and had talks with him for about 15 minutes without aides.

On his part, General Zia told Mr. Gandhi that India and Pakistan must co-exist and said that it was *not in competition* with India. Mr. Gandhi and General Zia also discussed bilateral relations and the question of South Asian regional cooperation.

Before leaving for Islamabad, General Zia told newsmen that he expected a dialogue with India to be resumed "very soon" for a meeting of Indo-Pak Joint Commission and added, Pakistan was waiting for a fresh date for the meeting from India.

After his meeting with President Zail Singh, General Zia said in an interview that all was quiet on Indo-Pak borders and there was nothing to worry about.

Asked about Pakistan conducting army exercises along the border and the exercise "Jet-stream" of the Pakistan Air Force, General Zia said that such exercises were routine and "quite normal".

On the question of the acquisition of sophisticated military hardware and the latest electronic surveillance aircraft, General Zia said that every country had the right to acquire arms to meet its defence requirements and added that this did not mean that the intentions are not good when a country acquires arms.

PTI adds : Hopes for a settlement of the existing problems between India and China and a rebuilding of the friendly relations between two countries to the level which existed in the early fifties were expressed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Chinese Vice-Premier, Mr. Yao Yilin, at New Delhi.

The Chinese Vice-Premier, who represented his country at Mrs. Indira Gandhi's funeral, at a meeting with Mr. Gandhi referred to the "centuries old friendship" and good relations existing between the two countries, the world's two largest developing nations.

China and India had similar problems and their main concern was the improvement of the economic condition of their people, he said.

Mr. Yao noted that under Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the process of improvement of relations between the two countries had started.

He recalled that Mrs. Gandhi had been invited to visit China and extended a similar invitation to the new Prime Minister to visit his country at a convenient date.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi assured the Chinese leader of the continuance of India's policies of friendship. "We look forward to

better relations with China of the type which existed in the 1950s, if not better", he said.

Rajiv Gandhi, though eager to develop better relations, did not fail to mention India's concern to US over arms to Pakistan.

US Secretary of State George Shultz, who represented the US at the funeral of Indira Gandhi, met Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and gave him a letter from President Reagan. In the letter, President Reagan said, he hoped Mr. Gandhi would be able to come to the US for the India Festival next year, as Mrs. Gandhi had planned to do.

Mr. Reagan who is having a second term in the presidency is apparently keen to reestablish personal contact with the new Indian leader. US prestige in India is at its lowest just now with Washington under considerable suspicion in the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the country-wide violence in its wake.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in the brief meeting told Mr. Shultz of India's concern over the deterioration in the security situation in the region, the US arms supply to Pakistan, and Islamabad's nuclear programme. The threat to India's security and integrity had exercised Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's mind all through her Prime Ministership, and the issue had become even more vital now.

Mr. Gandhi shared the sentiments expressed by Mr. Shultz and said India attached great importance to the friendship with the US "and there is good base for building it up."

Mr. Shultz, who also had discussions with Home Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, and with Mr. G. Parthasarathy, said the US desired to continue its "fruitful dialogue" with India and looked forward to working closely with the new Government.

The US, he said, had utmost confidence that the people of India would meet the challenge of fulfilling Mrs. Indira Gandhi's dream of a united, prosperous and peaceful India. US, he said, was committed to India's independence and territorial integrity as well as to the stability throughout the sub-continent.

The Prime Minister, in a message of greetings to the Soviet leaders has expressed the hope that the ties of friendship and co-operation between the Soviet Union and India would continue to develop and expand fruitfully.

The message was sent to the Soviet President, Mr. K.U. Chernenko, and the Prime Minister, Mr. N.A. Tikhonov, on the occasion of the 67th anniversary of the October Revolution. The message said :

“On behalf of the Government and people of India and on my own, I extend cordial felicitations and greetings on the occasion of the sixty-seventh anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

“The people of India have followed with admiration the great achievements of the Soviet Union in economic construction, in the arts and sciences and the people’s welfare. We have high regard for the dynamism of the hardworking Soviet people and their dedication to peace and goodwill among nations. We wish you further successes in your endeavours for peace and development.

“On this occasion, we derive deep satisfaction from the growing and time-tested friendship between India and the Soviet Union, which has deep historical roots. Our wide-ranging cooperation has expanded steadily bringing benefit to both countries. Indo-Soviet relations which are based on mutual respect constitute a factor for peace and stability. May our ties, friendship and cooperation continue to develop and expand fruitfully in the years ahead.

“My best wishes for your Excellencies’ personal health and well-being, and for the continued welfare and prosperity of the Great Soviet people”, the message concludes.

The Prime Minister sent the following message of felicitations to His Excellency President Ronald Reagan on his re-election as President of the United States of America :

“Dear Mr. President, on behalf of the Government and people of India as well as on my own, I extend our warm greetings and felicitations on your re-election as the President of the United States of America. May the American people

achieve still greater successes and progress under your leadership.

"The friendly relations between our two countries, world's largest democracies, are firmly rooted in shared ideals and aspirations for peace and development. I am confident that mutually beneficial cooperation between our peoples will be further strengthened and expanded in the years ahead. My wife joins me in sending to Mrs. Reagan and you our best wishes."

The Prime Minister on Sunday, November 11, 1984, sprinkled the ashes of Indira Gandhi from a special aircraft on the snowy peaks of the Himalayas, thus fulfilling his mother's last wish.

With it the earthly journey of Indira Gandhi came to an end on the awe-inspiring mouth of the Gangotri glacier, the source of the Ganga.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, maintaining his composure, scattered Indira Gandhi's ashes over the hard blue ice from the Indian Air Force AN-12 plane which soared to a height of 26,000 ft. in near freezing temperature and absolute stillness.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi dropped the ashes over the eternal snows of the Himalayas in baskets covered in red satin bags.

As Mr. Gandhi dropped them from the rear hatch of the plane, the bags opened up and flew away, dropping the ashes on the majestic mountains below.

A small platform had been put up in the aircraft on which the red bags containing the baskets were placed in rows over rose petals and garlands.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi dropped the baskets in two batches. The first drop was over the region between Gaumukh and Gangotri, the area where the Ganga rises.

The remaining baskets were dropped over the area from Nun Kun to Amarnath in Kashmir.

The two zones are about 550 km. apart over the great Himalayan range of mountains.

The ashes were dropped from a height of 25,000 to 26,000 ft.

The entire flight meticulously planned to the last detail by the Indian Air Force, took three hours and 15 minutes. But

for slight turbulence near Badrinath, sun-shine and excellent weather for flying facilitated Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in accomplishing the last wish of Indira Gandhi.

The AN-12 multi-engine aircraft also flew over Badrinath, Rohtang Pass, Keylong and Kishtwar areas.

In all 15 baskets and three urns containing the ashes were dropped from the aircraft.

A priest of the Lakshminarayan temple of New Delhi accompanied the Prime Minister in the plane.

Getting Down To It

Rajiv Gandhi assumed formal charge on November 12, 1984, of the Prime Minister's office at Central Secretariat, which his mother, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had occupied for over 15 years.

It was an emotional moment for by-standers and for him too as he reached South Block at 10.30 a.m. and was ushered into the teak-panelled office by Mr. P.C. Alexander, his Principal Secretary.

Attired simply in his usual white kurta-pyjama, with a shawl thrown around his shoulders to counter the nip of the November morning air, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was escorted by two of his close aides, Mr. Arun Nehru and Mr. Arun Singh.

Since his swearing in ceremony, Rajiv Gandhi had been attending to the urgent affairs of state from his residence at 1, Safdarjung Road.

After attending to some papers requiring his attention, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi drove to the All India Congress(I) Committee office on Akbar Road for a brief visit. He then went to the Rashtrapati Bhavan for consultations with President Zail Singh and be present for the swearing in of four of his Ministers, who had been out of town when designated earlier.

The Prime Minister promised to give the nation a clean and efficient administration which would give no quarter "to the corrupt, lazy and the inefficient" and ensure full protection from outside pressures to those who worked with integrity and dedication.

Spelling out his priorities in his first major policy statement to the nation over All India Radio and Doordarshan after assuming office 13 days ago, the country's youngest Prime Minister said, the administrative system needed to be more "goal-oriented". A new work ethic and a new work culture must be evolved in which the Government is result-bound and not procedure-bound", he declared.

Mr. Gandhi said the broad domestic and foreign policies of his mother's administration would be continued. He called for religious tolerance and harmony since "answering communalism by communalism" would only help "subversive and secessionist forces."

The following is the text of the Prime Minister's broadcast to the nation on November 12, 1984.

"Fellow Citizens,

"Yesterday the mortal remains of Indira Gandhi were consigned, as she had wished, to the mighty Himalayas. Her immortal spirit beckons to us to build the India of her dreams.

"Mahatma Gandhi breathed new life into our ancient land. He brought us freedom and taught us that the highest virtues are truth, love and non-violence. Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundations of a politically and technologically modern India—democratic, secular, socialist, non-aligned.

"Indira Gandhi built firmly on these foundations. She made the sovereignty of the people a reality and strove to ensure that policies and laws secured their rights. She fought against fanaticism and narrowness in all their forms. She made the nation self-reliant in agriculture, industry and several branches of technology. She battled relentlessly against poverty. Hers was the foremost voice for international peace in our tense and troubled world.

"Most important of all, she infused us with self-confidence and a sense of purpose. She gave us back our pride. This splendid heritage has been left to us by Indiraji. I pledge to

preserve this precious legacy and to work for a united, strong and prosperous India, an India devoted to the cause of peace.

"Nothing is more important than the unity and integrity of our nation. India is indivisible.

"Secularism is the bedrock of our nationhood. It implies more than tolerance. It involves an active effort for harmony. No religion preaches hatred and intolerance. Vested interests, both external and internal, are inciting and exploiting communal passions and violence to divide India. Answering communalism with communalism will only help these subversive and secessionist forces. The combined might of the people and the Government will thwart their designs. There is only one India. It belongs to all of us.

"Speedy removal of poverty is our basic objective. The Government is judged by the degree and quality of change it can bring about. Five years ago, when the people recalled Indiraji to office, she promised an effective Government and she kept her promise. Food production and energy output have touched record levels. Science has surged forward. Industry has resumed its dynamic movement. Employment opportunities are expanding. The economy has withstood the most severe natural calamities and international crises. The political and economic standing of India in the world is higher than ever.

"I reaffirm our adherence to socialism and planning. Without planning we could not have reached where we are. Our aim is continuous modernisation, higher productivity and rapid advance of social justice.

"In our plans, rural development will have priority; greater production of cereals, pulses and oilseeds; spread of irrigation; support for small industries and handicrafts and all-round induction of new technology. Large expansion of employment, specially for rural and urban youth, is essential to reduce economic disparities and to ensure social peace. For this, high rates of growth in agriculture and industry will have to be achieved.

"The public sector has played a historic role in laying the foundation of a modern economy. It has to shoulder greater responsibilities, and to become more efficient to generate surpluses for investment.

“Within the framework of national policies, the private sector has adequate scope to enhance the productive potential of the economy. But it should acquire the strength that competition provides by reducing costs and absorbing new technology. Both public and private sectors must venture out into new fields, improve quality and develop indigenous technology.

“Kisans and workers are the pillars of our economy. The focus of our policies on their welfare will be sharpened.

“Government will remain unwavering in its resolve to improve the living and working conditions of the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes, backward classes, artisans, agricultural labour, women and the urban poor. The 20-point programme of Indira Gandhi, which aims to fulfil the immediate needs of the people, will be faithfully and effectively implemented.

“Our greatest wealth is our people. We must enable individuals and families to realise their potential to the full. For this we shall stress programmes of family planning, nutrition, welfare of women and children, control of disease, elementary and adult education, sport and better communication.

“I am committed to improving the quality of service to the people. I want to tell all those involved in this task that if they work with integrity and dedication, they will have full protection from outside pressures and interference. But I also want to tell them that no quarter will be given to the corrupt, the lazy, the inefficient.

“Our administrative system must become more goal-oriented. A new work-ethic, a new work-culture must be evolved in which Government is result-bound and not procedure-bound. Reward and punishment must be related to performance. A strong concern for efficiency must permeate all institutions.

“The last few years have witnessed notable advances in science and technology. Indira Gandhi had a fine partnership with scientists, which helped the nation. I shall keep up this interaction.

“The creative arts give to life the vision of inner truth and beauty. We owe much to our craftsmen who have carried on centuries old aesthetic traditions and to our artists and

writers. We have to conserve our priceless heritage and create an environment in which art will flourish.

"Our educational system needs to be reconstructed as a dynamic force for national growth and integration. I intend to initiate a comprehensive review of the system and to build a national consensus for reform.

"For nation-building, the first requisite is peace—peace with our neighbours and peace in the world. Our security environment has been vitiated. Sophisticated arms have been inducted on a large scale into our neighbourhood and into the Indian Ocean. We can depend on our armed forces to ensure the country's inviolability. The Government will continue to do all it can for the modernisation of defence and the welfare of our service personnel and their families. I take this occasion to greet our jawans and officers in whose hands the nation's honour and integrity are safe.

"Eminent leaders and representatives of the world's nations came here last week bringing to us their people's sympathy. I made it clear to them that India will continue its work for international peace, friendship and cooperation.

"Jawaharlal Nehru bequeathed to us a foreign policy which Indira Gandhi so creatively enriched. I shall carry it forward. I reaffirm our adherence to the United Nations, to the Non-aligned Movement and to our opposition to colonialism, old or new. We are determined to work for narrowing international economic disparities.

"We want to develop closer relations with each one of our immediate neighbours in a spirit of peace, friendship and cooperation. This is what we have offered to Pakistan. We have always believed that non-interference, peaceful coexistence and non-alignment should be the guiding principles of our relationship. We shall further pursue the concept of common regional development of South Asia. Our relations with China are improving and we shall continue to seek a satisfactory solution to the difficulties.

"We highly value the wide-ranging and time-tested relationship with the Soviet Union, based upon mutual cooperation, friendship and vital support when most needed.

"We have always been friends with both the East and the West, as they are called, and we want better relations between them.

"With the United States of America, we have a multi-faceted relationship. We attach importance to our economic, technological and cultural cooperation with them.

"I wish also to assure the people of other regions—the Arab world, South-West and South-East Asia, the Far East and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America, the Carribbeans, and Western and Eastern Europe—that we are keen on strengthening political and economic relations with them.

"Indira Gandhi reminded us that the most important single challenge before the world today is the threat of nuclear war. We shall continue her relentless crusade against the arms race. She was equally concerned about the global economic crisis. We shall persevere in the efforts to promote a dialogue between the North and the South and to build a just world economic order.

"The assassination of Indira Gandhi is a grave and critical moment. There has been a churning of the subconscious of our people. It is in moments of crisis that India awakens and responds with clarity and new creative endeavour. Out of turmoil must arise an intelligence that builds a vital sense of togetherness, creates order and establishes a deeply human relationship between man and man.

"Our heritage, the most ancient and that left to us by the torch-bearers of freedom, rests on secularism and tolerance. Indira Gandhi gave her life in building an India which was rooted in these basic tenets. We have to fuse the wisdom of our seers with the insights and artifacts of science and technology. We have to conserve and cherish our heritage—political, cultural and philosophic. We have to establish a right relationship with our natural resources, strengthen our newly won self-reliance. With this we must have the courage to boldly innovate, for change is demanded in our methods of work, in the absorption of new knowledge, in the values we generate for ensuring a meaningful and creative life for our people.

"As we build today so will be the tomorrow. Together we will build for an India of the 21st century. Together we will

transform what needs transformation. Together we will face challenges and obstacles to progress. Together we will create an India that is strong, wise and great—a flame of peace and tolerance."

Rajiv Gandhi's first major statement, after assuming formal charge of the Prime Minister's office, was very much appreciated and acclaimed both by the Press and the people alike.

The Times of India commended it in its editorial entitled "A Clarion Call".

"Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's first major statement as Prime Minister is a clarion call to the nation to get over the trauma of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination and bend its energies to build 'the India of her dreams'. In a few, well-chosen words, he has invoked the great legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and his mother and pledged himself to carry the torch forward. In view of the circumstances of Mrs. Gandhi's tragic death and its aftermath, it is inevitable that he should have been at pains to emphasise again and again the virtues of secularism and tolerance, the basic tenets that bind the country together. But it is clear that he is as acutely aware of the need to fight the disruptive forces with the 'combined might of the people and the government' as of the positive factors at work. Thanks to the enterprise and skills of its people, the country has recorded spectacular gains in recent years in science and industry, agriculture and social reform. As chairman of the non-aligned movement, it has also been playing a major role in the comity of nations to halt the arms race, promote North-South dialogue and usher in a new international economic order. Its 'political and economic standing in the world', as the Prime Minister put it, 'is higher than ever'. He has done well to reassure everyone at home and abroad that the basic postulates of the Government's foreign, economic and social policies will remain unchanged. He has also indicated that, within that broad framework, the stress from now on at least in the domestic sphere will be on innovation, transformation and modernisation to meet the demands of the 21st century.

"Two other points are noteworthy in this context. First, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi knows that red-tape and bureaucratic sloth can thwart the best of the government's plans or intentions and

he has gone out of his way to promise 'full protection' to honest civil servants from political pressures. This assurance was obviously called for. Public servants can hardly be expected to evolve a new work-ethic if their career prospects continue to depend less on their performance than on the whims of their political masters. Besides, the Prime Minister recognises the serious infirmities of the country's educational system and is keen to do something about it. Whether a 'national consensus' that he envisages on measures for reform will be feasible, however, is another matter. More likely to attempt to evolve it will only waste time. Excellent schemes to universalise primary education, promote adult literacy, vocationalise secondary schools, and revamp curricula in universities are already underway. All that is required is to implement them with vigour."

The *Hindu* of Madras observed that Rajiv Gandhi had shown wisdom in reiterating his commitment to the policies of Indira Gandhi. In its editorial "A Careful, Positive Note", *The Hindu* observed:

"If the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's address to the nation on Monday offers no real clues as to what he means to do if and when he builds upon and consolidates his political authority and in that sense contains little that is new, the surprise would have been if he had opted for any other note for what was in effect his manifesto for the Eighth General Election called for December 24. What Mr. Gandhi and his political advisers have chosen to emphasise in the run up to the General Elections is the basic soundness of India's domestic and international policies and the theme of continuity with the strategic course worked out by two powerful political figures—his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first and longest-lasting helmsman, and his mother, Indira Gandhi, the nation's third and sixth Prime Minister, whose brutal assassination has created a great political void. Thus, Mr. Gandhi has referred to the 'democratic, secular, socialist, non-aligned' foundations of 'a politically and technologically modern India' and addressed the different aspects in a reassuring way—barring perhaps the democratic which has actually pulled through reassuringly despite all the strains, some of these terrible, and the internal and external

pressures. He has rightly assigned priority to the oneness, the indivisibility, the unity and the integrity of a nation of extreme vastness, diversity and contradictions. He has underscored the national commitment to secularism—which means waging an uncompromising war against communalism on all sides, against fanaticism and the narrow mentality that divide consciously in a socio-economic environment that offers ready opening for splitting. The Congress (I) chief has understandably, especially in an election-oriented address, promised to gear his Government to the 'speedy removal of poverty' and to the urgent attainment of social justice. There is also the reiteration of belief in 'socialism', planning, modernisation, productivity, rural development, a pace-setting public sector, a more competitive private sector, family planning and a host of other unexceptionable developmental goals and activities. However, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi must realise that during the last decade and more, policy making as a coherent development-oriented exercise suffered setbacks, got devalued and often, at the Central as well as at the State level, degenerated into ad-hoc responses to events, pressures, problems or crises. Simultaneously, corruption as a public affairs phenomenon grew, spread and deepened its pernicious hold in a big way. Moreover, while India during this period performed creditably on various fronts compared with most other countries, especially developing nations, it cannot be said that its institutional advantages got strengthened beyond question. The developmental challenge today is enormous—whether one is tackling the phenomenon of mass poverty or the issue of technological modernisation or the task of combining self-reliance with absorption of new technology and inculcating a scientific temper. The response to mass poverty and social justice must go far beyond the framework represented by the 20-point programme which clearly is inadequate, although unfortunately for the party ruling at the Centre it has come to assume a kind of transcendental function, like a *mantra*.

"In contrast to domestic political affairs, foreign policy is a sphere where the new Prime Minister has been able to draw upon experienced and astute counsel in underlining a strategy that has proved, in broad terms, realistic, independent, rooted

to the ground and successful in keeping India's flag aloft. This was Mrs. Gandhi's very important strength and it is wise that the Prime Minister has reiterated at this delicate juncture his commitment to all the essential components of the policy—non-alignment, anti-colonialism, improving relations with neighbours in a principled framework, building upon 'the wide-ranging and time-tested relationship with the Soviet Union, based upon mutual cooperation, friendship and vital support when needed' as well as the economic, technological and cultural cooperation with the United States, taking forward the improvement of relations with China, strengthening political and economic relations with all countries of the developing and developed world and, above all, the commitment to peace, especially against the danger of nuclear war. Overall, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's address sets a careful, moderate and positive note that—assuming the substantive gaps and the omissions will be attended to—will be received favourably across the nation even while opponents in the political arena will see it as an attempt to play safe while counting in a big way on the sympathy factor generated by the violent death of his mother."

The *Patriot* also commended Rajiv Gandhi's commitment to our basic policy frame. In the editorial entitled "Towards Twentyfirst Century" it observed :

"The smooth changeover, effected with the assumption of the Prime Minister's office by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, is a tribute to the stability and resilience of the political instruments carefully shaped since independence. It also reveals that the impact of the values and ideas we inherited from the struggle for independence has not been eroded. The achievement is made all the more remarkable by what the new leader's broadcast to the nation on Monday reveals : that it is more than a governmental crisis that has been averted, and more than a surface stability that has been preserved. The enemies who might have cherished the malicious hope that the saving of the immediate situation would still not hamper their medium and long-term plans have been disappointed once again.

"For, Mr. Gandhi has reaffirmed India's continuing commitment to the basic policy framework that has, more than

anything else, assured the nation's stability and strength in the face of diverse threats and challenges. The policy statement that he broadcast recalled the historical founts of the ideals and values enshrined in this framework—the unique freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and the socio-economic advance under Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi and clearly spelt out the specific tasks it entailed. Laying special emphasis on the basic nation-preserving task posed anew by recent events, Mr. Gandhi declared, 'Nothing is more important than the unity and integrity of India', and prophesised that the 'combined might of the people and the Government' would thwart the designs of those seeking to break the country. Dwelling on the nation-building work, the new Prime Minister administered a strong rebuff to seekers of India's undoing. He said : 'I reaffirm our adherence to socialism and planning, without planning we would not have reached where we are.' Underlining further the continuity through the critical times, he dispelled any doubt that interested quarters may raise about the role of India without Indira in the international arena. Reaffirming the country's adherence to the United Nations, to the Non-aligned Movement and to our opposition to colonialism, old or new, he put on record again its special recognition of the wide-ranging and time-tested relationship with the Soviet Union, based upon mutual cooperation, friendship and vital support when most needed.

"It is on the solid foundation of this framework that Mr. Gandhi begins his efforts for building 'an India of the twenty-first century'. The policy statement is distinctively marked by the new dynamism the young leader sets out to impart to national life, the new vision he brings to his job along with his reassured commitment to an invaluable heritage. He has stressed the need for 'the courage to boldly innovate, for change is demanded in our method of work, in the absorption of new knowledge, in the values we generate for ensuring a meaningful and creative life for our people'. He has, in this connection, pledged efforts for 'continuous modernisation', a 'goal-oriented' administration, and programmes for the people's welfare ranging from family planning to adult educa-

tion. The policies enumerated in the statement are, obviously, ones on which together a national consensus already exists to a great degree and on which it can still be enlarged and enriched. If the nation's vigilance against threats to its existence as an independent, united entity is not allowed to be lowered, its tryst with the twentyfirst century will indeed be kept."

Amrita Bazar Patrika commended Rajiv Gandhi's efforts to provide a clean administration. In its editorial "Rajiv's Dynamic Policy" it observed :

"In his first policy statement to the nation after assuming the office of Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, while reassuring the people that there would be continuance of the broad domestic and foreign policies initiated by his mother, promised to provide them with a clean government. That this is not an empty promise would be borne out by the guidelines he laid down for the functioning of the administration. Faced as the country is with formidable socio-economic problems, only prompt implementation of the development programmes with the requisite vigour and earnestness can bring relief to the people, the weaker section of the community in particular. Red-tapism and procedural wrangles, as is well-known, stand in the way of execution of development and welfare projects according to schedule. Mr. Gandhi has given the pledge to introduce a new work culture in which the Government 'is result-bound and not procedure bound'. It is a warning to the bureaucracy which is mainly entrusted with the task of implementing the Government's plans and programmes, that lethargy and inefficiency on its part on procedural pretext would not be tolerated in the larger interest of the nation. It is evident that he has in view a concrete plan to streamline the existing procedures, which have become outmoded. The introduction of new sets of rules and regulations to improve administrative efficiency may, therefore, be expected in the near future. This is essential to improve the quality of service to the people which he has promised. What is equally significant is his assurance that all those involved in the task would have full protection from outside pressure and interference—he had obviously vested interests in mind—if they worked with integrity and dedication. At the same time, he warned that no quarter will be given to

the corrupt, the lazy and the inefficient. Performance will be the main criterion for rewards and punishment. This is a combination of incentive and warning which is expected to make the bureaucracy aware of its responsibilities to the people.

"This reflects the Prime Minister's deep concern for social justice. He is fully aware that the planned progress made by the country during the last thirty years has not benefitted the weaker sections of the community to the extent that had been expected. It was to remove this lacuna, mainly the contribution of the percolation theory which now stands exploded, that Indira Gandhi had adopted the 20-point programme to fulfil the needs of the people. But the recent survey made by the Planning Commission reveals heavy shortfalls in terms of both financial and physical outlays. The 20-point programme was mainly intended to revitalise the rural economy and improve the standard of living of the rural poor. This has been sought to be achieved through the national rural employment programme, the integrated rural development programme and the minimum needs programme all of which are important items of the 20-point programme. Though the implementation of these programmes falls under the jurisdiction of the State Governments, the financial burden is mainly borne by the Centre. Mr. Gandhi has held out the assurance that the 20-point programme would be faithfully and more effectively implemented. As welfare of the rural people is the common goal of all political parties, the State Governments, it may be taken for granted, will extend their whole-hearted cooperation to his efforts to bring relief to the poor, both rural and urban. But Mr. Gandhi has not lost sight of the fact that much depends on the overall growth rate and increased production, both agricultural and industrial. The largest contribution to the increase in the Gross National Production has been made so far by agriculture while industrial growth has been lagging behind. Mr. Gandhi has approached the problem in his own way without suggesting any changes in the basic industrial policy. Continuous modernisation, higher productivity and development of indigenous technology have been prescribed by him to step up the rate of industrial growth. The public sector undertakings,

which are supposed to be the pacesetter, have been asked to shoulder greater responsibilities and generate surplus for investment. Concrete steps to attain this goal are expected to follow without delay. As the private sector has been assigned an important role in the industrial development of the country, its problems, too, have received his adequate attention. Evidently he will take the initiative to create the necessary conditions favourable for its growth and expansion. This drive to step up the pace of the country's economic advance will receive the whole-hearted support of the people as it is they who ultimately stand to benefit."

Free Press Journal of Bombay in its editorial entitled "On Expected Lines" commended the avowed pledge of Rajiv Gandhi to give a clean government free from corruption. The editorial read :

"Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assurance to the nation to continue the policies of Indira Gandhi should not, however, deflect one from discerning the change in emphasis in certain vital areas. In his nationwide broadcast on Monday evening, Gandhi sought to end the uncertainty in people's mind by spelling out the broad policy directions of his government. His resolve to continue Mrs Gandhi's domestic and foreign policies is hardly surprising. For not only was he fully involved, though informally, in the decision-making process in the last four years of Mrs. Gandhi's reign, but as one who has stepped into her office both in the government and the party he could hardly be in a position to stray far away from her path, at least in the near future. It is, however, his avowed pledge to give a clean government free from the taint of corruption which in itself is most reassuring. One hopes he conscientiously does all in his power to deliver his promise. In this context, one also welcomes the thrust of efficiency and performance rather than file-pushing and buck-passing in the Central administration. Those in the corporate sector who had persuaded themselves about an impending shift to the right would be disappointed by Gandhi's avowal to give the public sector a greater say in the nation's economy. But the proviso that the State sector should become more efficient and generate surpluses for further invest-

ments is remarkable and reveals that it too may have to change its slothful ways to survive under the new regime.

"Meanwhile, Gandhi's assumption of office as president of Congress party establishes his full sway over the organisation which is bracing itself to go to the polls on an upsurge of sympathy for him and the party following the tragic manner of his mother's end. His unanimous election as party president, and earlier as Prime Minister, reinforces the view that the party will continue to be one-person affair with other "leaders" only playing second fiddle to him. Admittedly from a purely political point, Gandhi's choice makes sound sense since the Congress is all set to work on the electorate's emotional upsurge. But one only hopes he has the energy and the requisite skills to shoulder the twin responsibilities. The more squeamish among his critics, however, cavil at his decision to take up the party presidentship even though such privilege is denied to ministers at the Centre and States who are barred by a standing order of the high command from simultaneously holding ministerial and party posts."

The *Tribune* of Chandigarh has also commended Rajiv Gandhi's emphasis on "a new work ethic" and "a new work culture". In its editorial entitled "Fully in the Saddle" it observed :

"Two points in the policy statement made by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi after his first day at the Prime Minister's Secretariat in South Block on Monday may be taken as the most significant indicators of his overall priorities. He promised the nation a clean and efficient administration which would give no quarter to 'the corrupt, the lazy and the inefficient', and assured full protection from outside pressures and interference to those who work with integrity and dedication. He then referred to the need for 'a new work ethic' and 'a new work culture' in which the Government would be 'result-bound and not procedure-bound'. These are broad but clear objectives and reflects line of thinking which befits a man of 40 sensitive to his environment and clear-sighted in the pursuit of his goals. If Mr. Rajiv Gandhi is re-elected and re-appointed Prime Minister and does nothing for a whole year except implement these two aims, he will have scored a major victory against the

discredited governmental and political systems over which he presides.

"Some will think that these are no more than brave words from the mouth of a person with a youthful approach to the country's problems and that the real test will come when the young Prime Minister faces the facts of life. Doubtless, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has still to learn a few ugly truths from experience. But his words do not for that reason lose the quality of earnestness. At least he seems to know the principal ailments that afflict the nation as a whole and the machinery of administration in particular. Corruption cannot be removed by waving a magic wand, but it is good to see that he has not dismissed a widespread disease as a global phenomenon. That he should emphasise the need for results in preference to procedure shows his desire to depart from existing practices which have tied up the administration in knots. As for the two species called the lazy and the inefficient, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi should have no difficulty in identifying these proliferating groups among public servants. He will find them in practically every room and corridor where bureaucracy is engaged in the trade of pushing files and evading responsibility. It is not easy to decide the point at which a start should be made so pervasive is governmental sloth and incompetence. And yet Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has made his promises which he must try to keep to deserve the hopes and goodwill with which he has embarked on his difficult job.

"On Monday he gave to the ruling party and the country a fair idea of the administrative and political instruments with which he plans to proceed with his tasks. For the time being anyhow he has decided to mix age, experience and youth in his teams of advisers and bureaucrats. Thus Mr. Kamlapati Tripathi, octogenarian counsel to his mother and loyal friend of the family, remains Working President of the Congress (I) of which Mr. Rajiv Gandhi himself has become President. Mr. Tripathi has also been given two other important assignments in preparation for the coming general election. At the other end of the scale are two much younger friends of the Prime Minister, Mr. Arun Nehru and Mr. Arun Singh, who have been formally inducted into the political system from their hitherto

undefined area of influence and operations. M.L. Fotedar fills the post of Political Secretary to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, which shows that he continues to be more than welcome in the immediate proximity of the Prime Minister. After the meeting of the party Working Committee the course seems to be set for the poll, and rumours of a possible postponement, though not entirely unfounded at one time are no more valid. The burden which Rajiv Gandhi is going to carry in the next few weeks, and possibly later, is indeed a very heavy one. His mother was known for her readiness to listen to advice from many quarters even if she made her own decisions in the end. The new Prime Minister will need all the advice he can get but he should know that the final word can really settle or unsettle the future of the country for quite a long time to come."

The *Financial Express* also commended the policy frame enunciated by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. In its editorial "Getting down to it" it said :

"Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has signalled his buckling down to his new tasks as Prime Minister and party president by a series of decisions and declarations that suggest a commendable sense of bustle and despatch. Granted that these were routine tasks that had to be attended to sooner or later, one senses a certain decisiveness rather than a tendency to dawdle in, for example, advancing the dates of the Lok Sabha polls. It is perhaps too early to talk of a sense of direction in addition, though one sees certain interesting nuances in the various appointments made to party offices, boards and committees and in the character of his personal secretariat. His broadcast to the nation indicating his policy perceptions and perspectives was also well timed, stressing that he was in command and raring to go.

"That the policy frame enunciated by the new Prime Minister emphasised continuity with the past was only to be expected. So was the standard rhetoric on adherence in domestic policies to socialism, planning and secularism. Continuity in foreign policy is even more of a necessity, if only because it is tailored to an external environment which we are only marginally, if at all, able to influence.

"But the interesting thing about the broadcast is the Prime Minister's dissatisfaction with certain functional rather than

philosophical aspects of our administration, economy and—most hopefully—an educational system. There is no fatalistic acceptance, at least as of now, of the proposition that 'corruption is a global phenomenon' in his declaration that he would not tolerate the 'corrupt, the lazy and the inefficient'. On result-oriented concern for productivity and forward-looking modernisation is again the right note to strike.

"Mr. Gandhi's induction of new faces in the government and party hierarchy has given rise to the liveliest speculation about the new directions in both that might be in the offing. Arun Nehru and Arun Singh and Fotedar have been Mr. Gandhi's backroom boys all these days and their entry into key positions in Government and the party was only to be expected. In any case, it is far better than having extra-constitutional grey eminences operating in secrecy and being unaccountable.

"Whether all this presages a new style of government and politics is too early to predict. For one thing, the imminence of the Lok Sabha elections into which Mr. Gandhi has to plunge immediately will not give him enough time to manifest fully his unique metier. Some straws in the wind may no doubt become evident in the actual choices of candidates but they will not be conclusive. The composition of the various committees (including the election manifesto committee) would suggest that Mr. Gandhi is not anxious to rock the boat just yet and has accommodated the various interests in the party.

In the long run, however, particularly if the Congress (I) wins the elections, Mr. Gandhi has an excellent opportunity to show his mettle as a leader. One thing is clear. His style has to be his own. It cannot be his brother's. Nor can it be his mother's or his grandfather's, if only for the reason that the context is vastly different. It is not sufficiently realised that Mr. Gandhi is the first Indian Prime Minister who does not have any pre-independence memories of his own. On the whole, this is more of an advantage than a disadvantage in that he will be without the burdens of the past that, incidentally the majority of Indians who are born in the forties and later, also do not have.

This does not mean that he can avoid reckoning with the older members of the Congress party at least at the leadership

level. They are heirs to the ineffable "Congress culture" with which Mr. Gandhi has to come to terms. Many of them may look askance for good and bad reasons at his new fangled preference for computer-determined decision making. Some accommodation with this group is necessary not only because of their political skills and experience but also because of their instinctive understanding of the still largely tradition-conditioned psychology of vast numbers of Indians particularly in rural areas. But the group that Mr. Gandhi could well do without and which he can, is the large body of lumpen and quasi-criminal elements that had infiltrated the party in the last few years. For the rest, Mr. Gandhi should strive, far more sincerely than his mother did, for a genuine consensual politics with the Opposition parties, based on a respect for the strong underlying federal impulses in a vast and diverse country."

Economic Times also applauded Rajiv Gandhi's decision to follow the policies laid down by Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi. In its editorial "Guidelines For Action" it said :

"Even as he indicated immediately after his swearing-in on October 31, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has confirmed in his broadcast to the nation that his policies, both political and economic, would aim at the consolidation of the gains of the previous administration. In this endeavour, he will be guided by Jawaharlal Nehru's vision and Mrs. Indira Gandhi's pragmatism. In one sense it is easy to dismiss the whole exercise as more of the same medicine. But in another sense, the Prime Minister has proved by decisive action in controlling the communal carnage in Delhi and other towns that he is capable of such action. While the broad policy frame may be inherited, the strategy for implementing it is his own. Two years ago when he became the general secretary of AICC (I), Mr. Rajiv Gandhi promised to clean the Augean stables of Congress (I) politics which earned him the title "Mr. Clean". Perhaps Mr. Gandhi can take decisive steps in this direction now, since he has become the party president too. The corruption, bickerings, groupism and factionalism in the party had posed major problems to Mrs. Gandhi. Whether one agrees with the way in which she found answers to those problems or not, Mr.

Rajiv Gandhi has given notice that the corrupt, the lazy and the inefficient" would not be tolerated. Along with it, he has shown his eagerness to cut out deadwood. The change he has made in the AICC set-up is only beginning. The Prime Minister's secretariat too has seen new faces. Without doubt this augurs a new work style. Mr. R.K. Dhawan will still be around. But the man who matters in the inner circle of the secretariat will now be Mr. Arun Singh.

"The Prime Minister has called for tolerance and harmony which will evoke a positive response. That communalism cannot be fought with counter-communalism is known.

"In foreign policy, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's government would make all-out efforts to mend political fences with India's neighbours and nurture the long-standing friendship with both the Soviet Union and the United States. This is both necessary and desirable. But the problems with Pakistan and China are major challenges. Mr. Gandhi will need all his patience and resourcefulness to improve upon the present phase of relationships with Islamabad and Beijing. This journal is particularly happy about what the Prime Minister has said about the urgent need for reforms in the country's educational system. The Prime Minister says that he is eager to evolve a national consensus for reform. We shall only repeat that he should not think in terms of yet another probe panel or study group. What is needed is a blue print for action under a dynamic cabinet minister. Since the Prime Minister has been talking in terms of India's march into the twenty first century, educational reforms brook no delay. The economic part of the Prime Minister's statement reaffirms that the present efforts in liberalising the economy will continue. He has almost repeated the guidelines emphasising the stress on food, work and productivity as enunciated in the Seventh Plan approach paper. His emphasis has been on enhancing the productive potential of the economy within the framework of national policies. That the public sector will have 'greater responsibilities' may be unexceptionable if those responsibilities include the improvement of production and productivity of the public sector units. Here again, one hopes that the Prime Minister will not think in terms of any new study or enquiry. If the government implements a fraction of

the recommendations of the Jha Committee, the public sector units would generate enough surpluses for investment."

Deccan Herald describes Rajiv Gandhi's first statement as balanced and dignified. In its editorial 'Rajiv Gandhi's call' it said :

"Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's address to the nation on Monday was sober, balanced and dignified. If there was nothing new in what the Prime Minister said, this was only to be expected. The tragic circumstances in which he has assumed the burdens of office rule out radical departures in policy or Kennedy-like turns of phrase. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi represents a new generation of Indians but he is in no position to dispense with the services of the Old Guard. For the time being, at any rate.

"Socialism, secularism and non-alignment—these have been our guiding principles. They were enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister and passed on to his daughter, Indira Gandhi. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has in his turn reaffirmed his commitment to socialism, secularism and non-alignment. Distributive justice flows from socialism. The practice of secularism is essential for maintaining the unity of the country. Our place in the comity of nations depends on adherence to the principle of non-alignment. Mrs. Gandhi inherited these tenets from her father and only history can pass a definitive judgement on how well she adhered to them in actual practice. Inevitably, changes had to be made in the light of prevailing circumstances. Mrs. Gandhi was a pragmatist. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has issued his testament. He will face his test in the arena of experience. Rajiv Gandhi has pledged a clean, efficient and goal-oriented administration. He has not forgotten the importance of education in the scheme of things and has promised to make it a dynamic force for national growth, integration and reform.

"With elections to be held in six weeks, it will be conceded that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had no option but to accept the invitation of the Congress Working Committee to accept the post of party president also. But in the long run, he will have to consider whether the interests of the party and indeed of democracy are best served by combining the two posts in the same person. In most parliamentary democracies, the head of

the party is distinct from the head of the Government. But as the head of the party, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi faces the task of transforming the Congress (I) from a crowd of squabbling schemers and self-centred seekers after self and position into an effective party machine dedicated to the interests of the party and the nation. Today's Congressmen are a sorry rabble, with no ideals or idealism. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said in his broadcast to the nation : "Together we will transform what needs transformation". What needs transformation most urgently is the party which he has inherited. Can he do it ? It is a daunting task but surely not an impossible one, given courage, grit and determination".

Presidents of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Indian Chamber of Commerce also praised the first statement of Rajiv Gandhi.

Welcoming Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's address to the nation as positive and forward-looking, M.S. Patwardhan, President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, said that the Prime Minister had rightly emphasised the need to improve the quality of service to the people and re-orienting governmental administration to meet the goal rather than being procedure-bound.

A new work-ethic, a new work-culture apparently has to be developed in the country, as stressed by Rajiv Gandhi. Mr. Patwardhan noted with satisfaction that steps in this direction have already been initiated as evidenced by the meeting of the Prime Minister with the secretaries to the Government and placing of the Department of Company Affairs under the charge of the Ministry of Industry.

The ASSOCHAM President also endorsed Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's stress on the public sector generating adequate surpluses for investment and the private sector building up competitive strength through modernisation and absorbing new technology. Both the public and the private sectors, as the Prime Minister has pointed out, must venture into new fields, improve quality and develop indigenous technology.

Welcoming Prime Minister's statement on economic policy, Mr. R.S. Lodha, President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, said on November 14, 1984, that it contained several

important features and laid stress on result-oriented and time-bound programmes. He said :

"Rajiv Gandhi's statement clearly demonstrated a sense of urgency to speed up the process of economic growth. He had rightly advocated for a 'work culture' which should aim at increasing the quality of production and productivity. His emphasis on competitive production and reduction of cost, acquisition and absorption of new technology, larger role for private sector generation of surpluses for investment and expansion of job opportunities were all welcome feature."

It was high time, Mr. Lodha said, that discipline was infused in every sphere of economic activity and infrastructural facilities were strengthened. These would help immensely in reducing costs and give a boost to industrial production.

Mr. Lodha further added that the Prime Minister's forthright policy statement gave the country purpose and direction and was an assurance to look forward to.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, on Tuesday, the 13th November, 1984, called for depoliticisation of administration.

Addressing a group of secretaries of the Union Government, Mr. Gandhi said one of the problems being faced by the Government was "unnecessary politicisation of administration at all levels. We must reduce it and if possible get rid of it."

He talked to three groups of secretaries following up on what he had said in his broadcast to the nation on Monday, November 12. He referred to the need for improving the quality of civil services as well as politics, to make the administration more efficient, elimination of corruption and use of education to promote a national outlook rather than a regional one.

The first group consisted of senior officers of the External Affairs Ministry, the second of officials of other departments under his control and the third of other ministries. It was in the third meeting that he elaborated on his ideas on administration after he heard a presentation by the officials on the general problems facing the Government.

Mr. Gandhi spoke of the strides made under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and then referred to the weaknesses in the

system. He wanted people in the Government to show more efficiency and courtesy to persons at other end.

The law and order machinery had become archaic. The administration had been weakened by interference and too much regionalism. This should change and the interest of the country as a whole must prevail. One of the ways of improving efficiency was to make accountability clearer and have more effective monitoring.

This was especially true of the public sector. Its responsibility was not only to show greater profitability but also to serve as a tool of development.

Mr. Gandhi emphasised that corruption must be rooted out at all levels. About public grievances, the Government would set up a grievance redressal machinery to reduce delays and arbitrary action. The proposal to have administrative tribunals had already gone through Parliament and the best way to go about the task would soon be found.

Mr. Gandhi was worried over how education had been used to promote regional feelings at the cost of national outlook. It was important to ensure that the quality of education was such that it fulfilled national goal's and the needs of character development. Education should also be related to industry and environment. It was the wrong type of education that made people leave their places and become unemployable.

Mr. Gandhi said two core areas—communication and energy be strengthened.

About agriculture, he noted that things were by and large alright. However, certain areas needed attention. For example, wheat fields were being brought under eucalyptus. The price mechanism would have to be used to ensure that national needs and priorities were served.

Mr. Gandhi thought that the procedures and methods of the Government were also archaic, but added that they could not be casually done away with. However, with greater efficiency, each ministry could find more projects. Personnel should be re-deployed in more productive areas and this could be done when machinery was introduced to replace men.

India's relationship with its neighbours and the non-aligned movement were discussed in Mr. Gandhi's meeting with

officials of the External Affairs Ministry. There was need to be vigilant about national interest when dealing with other countries.

Rajiv Gandhi advanced the dates of the Lok Sabha polls. It shows his sense of decisiveness rather than a tendency to dawdle. The entire country, except Punjab and Assam, will go to the polls on December 24 and in some states on December 27 and 28 to elect the Eighth Lok Sabha, Chief Election Commissioner, R.K. Trivedi, announced in New Delhi on November 12, 1984. With 27 constituencies—14 in Assam and 13 in Punjab—out of the fray, elections will be held in 515 of the 542 constituencies with an electorate of 37.43 crores.

As of now, simultaneous Assembly elections will take place in Manipur and Tamil Nadu and in the Union Territories of Arunachal Pradesh and Goa, Daman and Diu. The terms of their present Houses are to end early next year.

The five-year term of the present Lok Sabha expires on January 20 next year and a general election for the purpose of constituting the new House is therefore due.

Announcing the much-awaited, much-speculated poll timetable, Mr. Trivedi said that process would begin with the issuance of gazette notification by the President on November 20, 1984. The last date for the filing of nominations would be November 27. Nominations filed all over the country would be scrutinised the next day. November 30 was the last date of withdrawal by the candidates.

Counting will begin on December 28 and most results would be known the same evening.

A majority of the States have preferred a single day poll, while some larger States have in the past insisted on a two-day polling to enable the law and order and election machinery to be transported and readied on time at distant places.

Mr. Trivedi said the endeavour of the Election Commission would be to hold a single day poll in as many States and Union Territories as possible.

He convened a meeting on November 18-19 of the Chief Electoral Officers of the States which wanted a two-day poll to "persuade" them to accept a single-day time table.

Among these States were Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Rajasthan.

In no case would there be polling for more than two days as had happened during some of the past elections, Mr. Trivedi said.

The time table had been prepared after considerable discussions and correspondence with the Chief Electoral Officers and the law and order enforcement authorities in the States and Central Government.

Mr. Trivedi said the President's notification would not include Punjab and Assam, the time table of which would be announced in due course.

The country paid homage to its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, on Wednesday, November 14, on his 95th birth anniversary.

Throughout the day there was a constant stream of visitors to his *Samadhi* at Shantivana where excerpts from his speeches emphasising the need for unity were played over a public address system. Devotional songs were also sung during the day.

In the morning President Zail Singh, and the new Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, accompanied by his family, offered floral tributes at the *Samadhi*.

Mr. Gandhi and his family were surrounded by security men as they stood in silence at the *Samadhi* and then walked around it.

They also placed flowers on the platform on which Indira Gandhi was cremated a few days ago.

Children were given the pride of place in various functions all over the country.

The Indo-Soviet film on Jawaharlal Nehru, which his daughter Indira Gandhi could not see, was premiered in New Delhi on the evening of November 14 in the presence of Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

The film "Nehru" was cleared by the Soviet authorities in June and had been awaiting clearance from Mrs. Gandhi for any additions or changes. However, Mrs. Gandhi could not find the time to see the film.

Those present at the screening at Vigyan Bhavan included Information and Broadcasting Minister, H.K.L. Bhagat, besides other Union Ministers.

A three-member Soviet film delegation comprising film's co-director Yuri Aldokhin, script-writer Vladimir Zimyanin and director of the Tsentrnauch Film Studios Ryabinsky was also present.

The three-hour film presents various phases of India's freedom struggle and post-independence developments which had a bearing on Nehru's life and philosophy.

It has been directed jointly by India's Shyam Benegal and Soviet Union's Yuri Aldokhin. The commentary in English is by well-known character actor Saeed Jaffrey.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, has been elected chairman of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

A special meeting of the board of trustees of the fund held recently passed a resolution unanimously to this effect.

The board also adopted a resolution paying tributes to Indira Gandhi who had been the chairman of the fund.

In his first statement as the Chairman of the Non-aligned Movement, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said that he viewed with grave concern the escalating tension in Central America and threat of armed conflict in the region, specially in and around Nicaragua, a non-aligned country.

In a statement, Mr. Gandhi said that the situation posed danger not only to Nicaragua's sovereignty, but also to the independence and territorial integrity of the countries of the region endangering the region's stability and global peace and security.

Pointing out that the India's Permanent Representative at the United Nations was in active consultation with NAM Bureau members, Mr. Gandhi hoped that the Bureau would meet shortly to discuss the situation.

Recalling the deliberations of the New Delhi summit last year, Mr. Gandhi said, NAM had spoken out against acts of aggression, intimidation and sabotage against Nicaragua and had appealed for the cessation of all hostile acts against that country.

Stressing that the non-aligned nations had reiterated their firm solidarity with Nicaragua on various occasions since the NAM summit and had called for a solution to the crisis through political means, Mr. Gandhi said that in his view the Contadora process still represented the best opportunity for such a solution.

Mr. Gandhi expressed his hope for an early easing of tensions in the area and the resumption of a process of discussion and negotiation so that an understanding and accord could be worked out.

He said that he would ensure that the countries of the region live in peace and decide their own future free from outside intervention and interference.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi urged the scientific community to channellise the tremendous progress made by science into technology that would help improve the living standards of the people.

Addressing a group of scientists, he stressed the need to evolve a system that would cut through technical delays and help implement projects expeditiously.

Mr. Gandhi pointed out that the major thrust was needed in four areas for all-round development of the country—energy, communications and transport and education and culture.

The scientists included Prof. M.G.K. Menon, Member of the Planning Commission, Prof. Sharma, President of International Science Academy, Dr. V. Ramalingaswamy, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, and Dr. S.Z. Qasim, Secretary in the Department of Ocean Development.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, finding the cyclone damage to the coastal areas north of Madras and Nellore quite "substantial", announced a central assistance of Rs. 5 crores to Tamil Nadu and Rs. 7 crores to Andhra Pradesh respectively on an *ad hoc* basis.

Mr. Gandhi who made an aerial survey of the cyclone affected areas of Nellore and Chingleput districts, accompanied by A.P. Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and Tamil Nadu Finance Minister V.R. Nedunchezhian, told a Press conference later in the evening that a central team would be sent to these areas shortly to assess the damage.

Decision on further assistance would be taken after the report was received, he added.

Mr. Gandhi said a sum of Rs. 5 lakhs each for Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu would also be granted by the AICC(I) besides Rs. 15 lakhs for each of these States from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

The Prime Minister said, he found many areas still marooned around the Nellore coast and that he could not land at Srihari-kota. He had a meeting with the local officials at Nellore regarding the cyclone relief operations.

Mr. Gandhi assured that the armed forces would undertake relief operations by supplying food, medical facilities etc., to the people still marooned there. A medical team would also be flown to the affected villages.

Addressing his first Press conference at Raj Bhavan, after becoming the Prime Minister, Mr. Gandhi deferred his party's poll alliance with the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu.

"We have to take into consideration what is best in the national interest, although it may not be in the best interest of the Congress(I)", he said.

State Electricity Minister S. Ramachandran interjected to say "in the State's interest also".

Smilingly, Mr. Gandhi added "In the State's interest also".

Mr. Gandhi was answering a newsman's question about his party entering into a poll alliance with the AIADMK despite the fact he was publically opposed to any truck with regional parties.

About the demand for election to Pondicherry Assembly, he said that he had not received any report from the territory's Lt. Governor recommending that the poll be held.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi paid floral tributes at the *samadhi* of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at Shantivana on her 67th birth anniversary.

On the birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi called the nation to fight divisive forces.

He said that people should not respond to Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination by showing anger "but by putting all our energies together by sinking our differences and by keeping together."

Addressing a massive public meeting on India Gate lawns he asked people to remain united and not to forget why the late Prime Minister was killed and which were the forces behind the act. He said by remaining together alone the nation could be kept united.

He said there were some riots in the country soon after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. People were angry and for a few days the nation was in turmoil. People must remember, he said, that whenever a big tree fell, the earth did shake a bit.

But the promptness with which it was stopped and the way the people united and tried to stand together was noted by the whole world. The world has seen that India had matured into a strong democracy, he said. The Prime Minister said, "We shall take the nation still forward and see that the work started by Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi and the work for the benefit of the poor is completed fast".

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said, Mrs. Gandhi's assassination was aimed at not only killing her but at dismembering the whole nation. "But we showed to the world that the foundations laid by Gandhiji and Nehru are not that weak that they can be shaken by a few bullets".

He said people must observe how the forces which were behind the assassination were getting help from abroad. He said, "All our energies are to be used to finish these forces." He asked the people to provide him strength for the job and also to keep their calm.

"Sometimes things done in passion or in grief can prove helpful to enemies of the nation", he cautioned the people. "With equanimity the nation is to pursue the policies which have benefited her", he added.

The India Gate meeting was organised by the Delhi administration in memory of the late Prime Minister whose birth anniversary was observed on November 19. Besides the large gathering of people, MPs, ministers, councillors, diplomats and some prominent citizens were among those present. All through his 16-minute speech Mr. Gandhi was cheered by a responsive audience.

Mr. Gandhi said, this was the first birthday of Mrs. Gandhi when she was not amidst the people. Thirty-seven years ago

when Gandhiji was shot, he had not really died but kept guiding the nation towards progress. Though Mrs. Gandhi died a few weeks ago, she continued to provide strength and guidance.

He said, when a person reached a stature like the one attained by Mrs. Gandhi, her physical body did not remain that significant as her thoughts and what she did before Independence and what was her performance as the Prime Minister became more relevant. Her contribution became evident when a comparison was made between India and other countries.

“After 37 years of Independence we can say we are free in all respects”, Mr. Gandhi said. He said, if a view was taken of India’s neighbours or of several Asian and African countries, very few would be found to be democracies and fewer in a position to be able to stand up with as much esteem as India could.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi told the people that Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi had taken the country to a path which made her really strong. And this they were able to achieve only when they were extended whole-hearted support by the people.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi introduced such programmes which kept the people of the country together. “We have to keep these programmes for the benefit of Harijans, tribals, minorities and other weaker sections of the society.”

One such programme for the benefit of weavers, which was conceived by her, was announced by his Government on November 13, 1984. The programme envisages higher subsidy for the weavers. There are several other programmes which would have to be pursued with vigour.

He said, that people in politics or in services would have to improve their performance. The nation had limited resources of money and its misuse would have to be avoided, he added.

Information and Broadcasting Minister, H.K.L. Bhagat, said that Gandhiji had become the Father of the Nation by achieving independence for it and Mrs. Indira Gandhi had acquired the stature of the Nation’s mother by serving it for so long and with distinction.

Mayor Mahinder Singh Saathi said, Mrs. Gandhi faced new challenges every day of her life. He said, he was confident the

new Prime Minister would face the challenges with the same determination.

Chief Executive Councillor Jag Parvesh Chandra said, it was difficult to believe that Mrs. Indira Gandhi was no more. He said, people would extend all support to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi who had shouldered the responsibility of the nation at a crucial time.

Lt. Governor, M.M.K. Wali, who presided said, it was difficult to describe Mrs. Gandhi's personality. The biggest tribute to her would be to follow the principles for which she sacrificed her life. Even after her death she continued to provide light to the nation, he said.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's fervent appeal to his countrymen to stand united and fight disruptive and destabilising forces is significant in view of the recent tragic events in the country. India needs peace and harmony, both inside and outside the country, to be able to concentrate on its mission to eradicate poverty and to raise the living standards of the people. Indira Gandhi had all along been stressing this point. Her martyrdom should teach us many lessons and the most important is the danger from the cult of hatred. Mr. Gandhi has emphasised that people would pay the most fitting tribute to Indira Gandhi by following the principles and ideals for which she stood and worked throughout her life. Indira Gandhi undertook a crusade for peace and waged a war on poverty. She wanted vigorous implementation of the 20-point programme to better the lot of the weaker section. She detested communalism, casteism and regionalism and propounded the need for national unity and integration.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's emphasis on right means to achieve right ends is timely. As the country's Prime Minister, he is undoubtedly aware of threats, both internal and external, to the nation. The way of bullets is no way to solve political issues. What the country needs is the old spirit of unity, service and sacrifice to strengthen brotherly bonds and to harness all available resources for the country's defence and development—Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's pledge to work for the ideals which Indira Gandhi cherished shows the nobility of his mission to make the country strong. It is the duty of all patriotic people to strengthen his hands. It is in moments of crisis that Indian

people have always risen to the occasion. The way the Prime Minister handled the critical situation in the last few days has proved that the country's interests are in safe hands. But the people have to strengthen his hands by giving him full support in the great task of nation-building.

Appu Ghar, fun for children with electronically operated rides and games, was inaugurated at Pragati Maidan by the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, on November 19, 1984, to coincide with Indira Gandhi's birthday.

Said to be the first of its kind in the country, the main attractions of Appu Ghar are "Appu merry-go-round", "Toofan Mail" and a dragon roller coaster. They are all electronically operated games, something on the pattern of Disneyland.

Appu Ghar will be a permanent feature at Pragati Maidan and children will be able to enjoy the fun all the year round on priced tickets. Entry fee is Rs. 2 for adults and Re 1 for children. The tickets are valid for entry into the trade fair complex too.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi came in the morning accompanied by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, his wife, and Rahul and Priyanka, his two children. After formally inaugurating it, he went round the Appu Ghar complex spending about an hour in the trade fair.

Speaking briefly on the occasion, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said, a lot had been done for the adults and he was happy to note that a place of fun for children had been created in the complex. He said, Indira Gandhi took great interest in the welfare of the children and was very keen to have a place like Appu Ghar.

Spread over an area of about 15 acres, Appu Ghar will ultimately have 18 modern electronically operated rides. The "Toofan Mail" will go through the curves, climbs, and descents as well as ground-loops. Other games are "Bruco baby train", coil operated baby figures, muscle man, punch ball, baby cars and laughing clown.

Appu Ghar was a big draw on November 19, 1984. Free entertainment was given to children. At times it was an uncontrollable crowd. Security reinforcements had to be summoned to control the crowd.

Meanwhile, trade fair was picking up fast. On November 18, 1984, the fair drew a record crowd of about 1.5 lakhs. Monday, November 19, 1984, was equally crowded.

In a statement that clearly indicates his perception, the new Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, on November 20, 1984, warned the Indian Air Force Commanders about the nature of the threat from Pakistan. He told them at their bi-annual conference in New Delhi that there was a danger that the weapons Pakistan was acquiring ostensibly for use in Afghanistan might be redirected against India.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi also referred to the reports in the US press about Pakistan's developing nuclear device which he told the Air Force top brass was "again a matter of great concern to our country".

This was the second time after his taking over as Prime Minister that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had expressed concern about the acquisition of latest weapons by Pakistan and its nuclear programme. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi first expressed concern on these two points when the US secretary, Mr. George P. Shultz, met him soon after Indira Gandhi's funeral.

The Prime Minister's statements as well as what the Foreign Office has been saying in the recent weeks makes it plain that there is no change in the government's policy on Pakistan after Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's taking over.

While the Foreign Office has protested against the pro-Khalistan noises that the Sikhs from western countries have been allowed to make at Nankana Saheb in Pakistan, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi himself has criticised the acquisition of sophisticated weapons by Pakistan and its nuclear programme.

The Air Force Commanders meet twice a year to take stock of the security environment and exchange ideas on defence strategy. What the Prime Minister told them was put out by the Defence Ministry in a press release.

Reviewing the security environment around India and the international situation, the Prime Minister said, the world climate had shown no signs of improvement.

On the continuing arms build-up by Pakistan he said, the weapons it was acquiring were ostensibly for use in

Afghanistan and the mountainous terrain but in reality they were very difficult to be used there. "There is a danger of their being redirected against us."

Referring to the country's past experience, the Prime Minister said, whenever there was a build-up like this in Pakistan with outside link-up, invariably India had suffered.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said, it was essential that the defence forces were ever prepared to defend the unity and integrity of the country. The defence forces had been modernised so that they would always be adequate to their task. The acquisition of new aircraft by the IAF was to ensure that it did not lag behind other air forces of the world, he said.

He stressed the need to pay greater attention to defence research and development. "We must plan further into the future. I get a feeling that when we talk about our own research and development, our perceptions do not go far enough ahead and by the time our research and development had developed something, the world has moved much further ahead. We should try and jump ahead, may be 10 years or 15 years", he said.

He also stressed the need to bring about greater co-ordination between the three services at various levels and said that there was greater need for such coordination specially among the lower ranks where interaction could make a great difference in the effectiveness of the fighting forces.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is contesting from Amethi parliamentary constituency. The Opposition has decided to support Mrs. Menaka Gandhi who will be contesting against him.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has filed his nomination from Amethi Lok Sabha constituency.

As a battery of Indian and foreign TV and other news cameras whirred, the newsmen from various parts of the country and the world besides some eminent ministerial colleagues watched, the Prime Minister signed four sets of nominations in the crowded court room of the Sultanpur District Magistrate, who is also the returning officer for the Lok Sabha election from that constituency.

His name has been proposed by four members of the State Assembly from his constituency—Ram Sewak Dhobi, Sanjay Singh, Minister for Forests, Shiv Balak Pals and Haji Wasim.

It took 11 minutes for the Prime Minister to complete the process. He stood up at the end of it and read the oath to Constitution, both in Hindi and English, and then thanked the returning officer with folded hands before departing from the room.

The Prime Minister said on 20th Nov., 1984, that his government would take the initiative in solving the Punjab and Assam problems after the general elections.

Talking to newsmen immediately after filing his nomination papers for Amethi Lok Sabha constituency, Mr. Gandhi said, the Sikhs as a community had not been alienated from Congress (I). "A section of them, however, has never been with us," he added.

The Prime Minister hit out at Pakistan for encouraging Sikh extremists. In direct reference to the Pakistan government authorities, he said, the way they acted with the *jatha* that visited Nankana Sahib, proved their complicity.

Not a single case of hijacking of Indian aircraft had been tried by Pakistan. He said, even the persons involved in last hijacking had not been tried and the Pakistan government had merely dubbed it as an arms law entrenchment.

This, Mr Gandhi pointed out, was in sharp contrast to the Pakistan government's stand against hijackers of a PIA flight. "Something is wrong somewhere," he added.

In reply to a question, Mr. Gandhi said, only the enquiry would reveal the foreign hand behind Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination. India had taken action against the self-styled leader of Khalistan, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, with the British government.

Mr. Gandhi, who is also the Congress (I) president, said the country's integrity and unity would be the main planks of his party's election campaign.

He said he was confident of winning the elections. Asked if he would be able to obtain a majority equal to what Mrs. Gandhi had secured, he said, "Let us watch".

He described the Congress (I)'s chances at the polls as "very good". The candidates, he said, "were being selected with an emphasis on integrity, image and performance."

Asked if he would be making large scale changes in the government and party after the elections, Mr. Gandhi said, "Let's wait and see."

The Guardian on November 20, 1984, complimented Mr. Rajiv Gandhi for his pragmatic approach to India's problems and expressed the hope that he would live up to his words.

"To date Prime Minister Rajiv's actions have been impressive. Let us hope his words live up to them," the widely respected independent English daily said in an editorial on the new Prime Minister's first public speech in New Delhi.

"Mr. Gandhi is a young man who came to high office inexperienced and unwilling, against his will over the dead bodies of his brother Sanjay and his mother. He is said to be moderate and realistic. His actions have been impressive."

The Guardian said that in the aftermath of the killing of Mrs. Gandhi to go ahead with the elections as planned "would be the greatest test to date of the maturity of the Indian electorate."

"Rajiv Gandhi has decided to impose that test upon his sorely tried people and he is to be saluted for his determination. More so as he coupled his announcement with indications that he intended to take the axe to the dead wood in Indira's ramshackle and often times corrupt party. If he can purge coherently and replace it competently within the next couple of weeks he will have done his nation a considerable service."

The Guardian then recalled the rally in New Delhi when Mr. Gandhi was quoted as referring to some "unnamed hands" behind what is called a conspiracy to destabilise India.

"Does Mr. Gandhi seriously see the long arm of the CIA as Moscow claims to do? Or does the buck stop in Islamabad? (The unseemly squabble with Pakistan over the Sikh militants on pilgrimage there recently is a setback to President Zia's olive branch, the editorial said.)

In New York the "bullets will not shake India" speech of Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, at the Boat Club rally in New Delhi received prominent display in the American press on November 20, 1984.

Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* carried long reports on the event marking the 67th birth anniversary of the assassinated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The papers highlighted Mr. Gandhi's call for keeping the country "strong and united."

The *Washington Post* reported that Mr. Gandhi charged that his mother was the victim of a foreign linked conspiracy, but the *New York Times* only quoted the Prime Minister as saying that Mrs. Gandhi's assassination was "an effort to break India into pieces."

The *Times* carried the dispatch with the headline : "Gandhi tells cheering crowd bullets will not shake India."

On Monday, November 18, 1984, after the closure of the meeting of the Non-Aligned Coordinating Bureau, several ambassadors expressed to Indian Ambassador N. Kishnan, their appreciation of the message which Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had sent to the Bureau.

In his speech at the Boat Club rally on Indira Gandhi's birthday and his remarks at the biannual Air Force Commanders' conference, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has warned the nation against dangers still looming large on the horizon and identified several critical areas where relentless vigilance is the need of the hour. The Prime Minister did not mince words and took the country into confidence about the real intentions of India's enemies. Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Prime Minister said, was the handiwork of forces working for the balkanisation of India. Her death can be avenged only by consolidating nation's unity and defeating the sinister designs against the country's independence and integrity. The nation must not forget even for a moment that the plotters are likely to pursue their aim with greater ferocity now that the country has demonstrated its ability to withstand such a traumatic shock. The mischief will now take the form of a pincer movement combining internal disorder and external pressures.

Though the violence which rocked different parts of the country recently has been effectively brought under control, rumour-mongers are still working overtime with a view to create tension and conflict. Communal, Right-wing and reactionary forces, clearly in the employ of India's enemies, want to disturb and disrupt the peaceful conduct of Lok Sabha elections because an orderly poll would stabilise the process of political transition and demonstrate convincingly the anti-imperialist resolve of the Indian people. By creating chaotic conditions in the country during the next few weeks, India's external enemies and their internal agents hope to stir a vicious controversy and cast doubts about the legitimacy of the electoral verdict. They may also want to prepare the ground for post-electoral political confrontation : the game is to keep the Indian polity unsettled so that the country may not tackle the many problems it faces.

Across the border, the US administration and General Zia-ul-Huq's military dictatorship in Pakistan is engaged in a massive arms build-up. Only the gullible are taken in by the humbug that these sophisticated arms are being supplied to Pakistan for use against the Soviet Union. As in the past, this massive arms supply will only encourage Islamabad to become more belligerent and use the American weaponry against India. General Zia's smiles and sweet words are only a smokescreen to conceal his real intentions and actions. Obviously, he has agreed to play the role of Washington's *gendarme* in South Asia by allowing Pakistan to be used as America's instrument of interference in the internal affairs of its neighbours which refuse to follow the US dictates. On the one hand, Pakistan is providing shelter, arms, money and political support to Afghan mercenaries who are being used to create difficulties for the Government in Kabul ; on the other, it has set up training camps for pro-Khalistani terrorists. Pakistani media is giving to them a propaganda boost, the Government in Islamabad is providing them opportunities to hold conferences where they engage in anti-India tirade and make provocative statements. In fact, the military regime in Pakistan has become a menace for peace in the region.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's words of caution in this regard are as valid for the armed forces as they are for our people and political parties. The most important task before the entire nation is to maintain vigilance at a very high level and ensure that peace is not disturbed. The country must not allow the enemy to catch it unawares, now or in the period immediately after elections. In this context, all political parties bear the responsibility of exercising restraint even in the midst of heat and passion generated by the election campaign.

For the first time, in perhaps a decade or so, the so-called "old and traditional" Congressmen have begun to feel that they are not unwanted outcasts in the party and that they also may have their uses. Ironically, this has come to pass in the wake of the death of the very person who had kept them in a state of suspended animation, namely, Indira Gandhi. Although she had permitted the re-entry into the Congress (I) of many of these old-time leaders and party functionaries, they were not given any position of importance.

Now that the next round of parliamentary elections has been fixed for December 24, there has been a tremendous surge of activity in the Congress (I), and various committees at both Central and State levels are coming into being. Many of the senior Congressmen who did not count for much in the organisation all these years now find their names included in some committee or the other.

This is not surprising considering the circumstances under which the party is currently placed. One, of course, does not know what role would have been assigned to some of these senior leaders if the elections had come in Indira Gandhi's lifetime. But the new party president, Rajiv Gandhi, apparently is following the line of least resistance by balancing the old and the young, the experienced and the new. Thus, not only have almost all the senior party leaders been accommodated in one committee or the other, but even known dissident leaders find a place in the committees. Leaders like Brahmananda Reddy, Krishan Chandra Pant, Vidya Charan Shukla and many others either head or are part of some committees and are being required to pull their weight in winning the polls for the party.

That there were apprehensions among most of the old-time stalwarts of the party, who had strayed away from it and returned to it subsequently, about their positions in the organisation was well known. The "home-coming" of some of them had been held up by Indira Gandhi herself. After their admission, they were either ignored or just tolerated. But, now there is expectation that not only before and during the election but after it also, Rajiv Gandhi would maintain the exercise of balancing and give them some role to play in the party.

The installation of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister in the wake of the tragic slaying of his mother justly stirred hopes within the country and abroad of a healthy change in New Delhi's style of functioning. Considering the traumatic circumstances in which the mantle of power fell on him, it was even felt that Gandhi would act more like a consensus head of government than as a mere party leader. In good measure, this feeling was prompted by the harsh reality that the relatively inexperienced and youthful leader needed all-round support, cutting across party lines, to cope with the formidable challenges that confront the nation at the present critical period. It needs to be pointed out here that even such a time-tested, determined and strong-willed leader as Indira Gandhi failed to find solutions to the worrisome problems that stare the nation today.

The burdens of Prime Ministership are considerably lightened for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi by the fact that he has no major pressing economic problems to deal with and can, therefore, give priority to the more urgent tasks of keeping the country united and handling the political situation.

One of the legacies of Mrs. Gandhi to him is a record national grain reserve of 22 million tons and the fact that exports are being considered after a bumper crop over the past two years, climaxing in a record grain yield of 151 million tons in 1983-84. This means that the food situation is well under control.

The other major factor is that the country's foreign exchange reserves have been steadily rising over the past eight months and now stand at the record level of over Rs. 6200 crores. This means roughly six months worth of imports—a relatively

comfortable level that has not been available to the Government for many years.

The foreign exchange reserves level would enable the Government to meet repayment liabilities, including those in respect of the International Monetary Fund, as well as to import essential commodities without difficulty. This relieves the pressure on the new Prime Minister to deal with any problems that might arise without the need to keep a watchful eye on what otherwise would have been crucial factors.

That the international financial community has reaffirmed its faith in India's ability to tackle the economic situation is borne out by the fact that the high credit rating has been maintained. For a couple of days after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination there had been some doubt about this.

The doubts lasted no more than two days. Thus a huge commercial loan for the National Aluminium Company's alumina project that was due to be syndicated was delayed for only two days and has now been speedily cleared on the original favourable terms.

Another factor in favour of the new Government is the fact that inflation is under control and the annual rate has fallen to just over 6% nearly 3% less than the inflation rate at the same time last year. Wholesale prices, though not consumer prices, have been falling for some weeks, and a slight upward trend was resumed just a few days ago. But the overall price situation is considered satisfactory.

All this means that Mr. Gandhi does not, unlike his mother when she first became Prime Minister, need to give his immediate attention to economic problems. But as Prime Minister, he will find he will have several economic tasks before him.

At the moment, the most important is finalization of the Seventh Plan for which a public sector investment of Rs. 1,80,000 crores is projected. Exercises on completion of the plan are proceeding, and hopes were that the document would be ready for discussion by the National Development Council by year-end.

This process would now be delayed, especially because of elections. The NDC meeting would probably be held in February or March. But the Planning Commission itself, of

which Mr. Gandhi is Chairman by virtue of being Prime Minister, will have to finalize the document well before that.

The main difficulty in preparing the plan is shortage of resources. It has been proposed that the taxation net be widened and more important, the heavy loss-making public sector enterprises be gingered up and made sufficiently profitable to yield funds for the Plan. Expert committees have finalized their recommendations on how this can be made possible, and it will be one of Mr. Gandhi's early tasks to act on them quickly so that adequate resources for the Plan are available from the start.

The Prime Minister has sent the the following message wishing success to the fourth Indian expedition to Antarctica which left Goa recently :

"The foresight of Indira Gandhi started the Antarctica programme three years ago. This activity has grown very fast with a permanent station being set up last year. Very valuable scientific work has been done by our expeditions.

"I am glad that a fourth expedition is now planned and that an expedition to the South Pole is also planned.

"I give my good wishes to the members of the expedition. The nation takes pride in their spirit of adventure and enquiry.

"The best of luck and a safe journey home."

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on November 23, 1984 ,offered to send foodgrains and medicines to African countries faced with a long spell of drought and famine.

In a statement, he expressed India's solidarity with the African countries affected by the calamity and said that India was ready to share its experience and resources in helping the African brethren in meeting this stark challenge.

Mr. Gandhi said : "We are willing to send grain, medicines, teams of doctors, as well as, other experts that may be needed by the most seriously affected countries in Africa."

He said, India's diplomatic missions in Africa had been asked to get in touch with the Governments of these countries and to ascertain their specific requirements for medical and other technical personnel to help overcome the present crisis.

Mr. Gandhi said : "As Chairman of the Non-aligned Movement, we are in touch with other non-aligned countries in overcoming the present crisis."

At the outset, the Prime Minister said, Africa today faced a grave situation and "our hearts go out in sympathy to the people of the affected countries."

He said, the people had been facing hunger, disease and death. "We are deeply concerned at this colossal human suffering unprecedented in Africa," Mr. Gandhi added.

Star on the Horizon

"Please be brave like your mom and rule India well."

This is a suggestion made to the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, by a seven-year-old Sikh girl from Vancouver, Canada.

In a touching letter, the girl says, "I am sorry you have lost your mummy. I feel sorry for you and us. My mom says that Mrs. Gandhi was a great lady and some bad men killed her. Please give my love to your children and tell them I am sorry they have lost their grandma because grandmas are good ladies. I have my grandma very much. Please be brave like your mom and rule India well."

In his reply, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi said, "I was struck by your message. My mother was indeed a great and courageous person. She loved children. In fact she regarded children as her best friends. Scores of young girls around the world were named Indira after her."

"Thank you for good wishes. If the adult members of the Indian community in Canada, irrespective of their language or religion follow your example and sink their differences in the interest of a strong and united India what a source of strength it would be to me and to the people of India. It is a tragic and difficult time."

Rajiv Gandhi is indeed a brave man—a man of courage. The story of his life is nothing but a saga of courage.

Rajiv joined the political arena only four years ago but in this short span of barely four years, combination of circumstances plus his extensive travels and the consequent media attention had helped to make Rajiv Gandhi better known in the country than anyone else in the Congress (I), other than, of course, Indira Gandhi herself. This apparently was one of the major considerations in his selection as Mrs. Gandhi's successor, especially in view of the impending general elections, says Sumer Kaul in his article entitled 'Enter Rajiv Gandhi.' He adds :

"And yet barely five years ago Mr. Gandhi was nowhere near the national stage. He was the elder son of Mrs. Gandhi and a pilot with Indian Airlines, and that was all. Never in Mrs. Gandhi's first long innings from 1966 to 1977 did he ever figure in any political event or decision-making. Quiet and unassuming, he appeared to be wholly apolitical. The man in the limelight was his younger brother, first during the Emergency and then after Mrs. Gandhi's triumphant comeback in January 1980.

"Sanjay's tragic death on June 23, 1980, changed the whole scenario. Political pundits, party workers and opposition leaders alike wondered if Rajiv would fill the void. By training and temperament he seemed ill-suited to the role of a politician. But Mrs. Gandhi desperately needed someone whom she could turn to for help and advice, and it had to be someone whom she could trust instinctively and totally. Reportedly reluctant at first, Rajiv just could not say no to his mother, much though he was looking forward to flying Boeings for which he had just completed his training.

"The die was cast, but few people could ever have foreseen that the quiet IA pilot would be asked to steer the national ship within just a few years.

"He had himself laughed at the suggestion three years ago. And perhaps rightly so. Rarely has a man in modern-day politics even in this country of idol worshippers risen so high so fast.

"At 40, Rajiv Gandhi is the youngest Prime Minister India has had, and certainly among the youngest heads of government anywhere in the world. It is altogether welcome and refreshing to have a young man at the helm.

"In the four years since he entered politics he has packed more than others, not in his advantageous position could even dream of doing, in terms both of public and party activity ; and he has done rather well by himself.

"Before Sanjay's death, Rajiv was not even an ordinary member of the party. After spending the first 12 months in what might be called basic acclimatisation, he was asked to be the party's candidate in the Lok Sabha bye election from Amethi, the seat his brother had won in January 1980. Aided by his Italian wife, Sonia, and some old school cronies (later to be known as his "computer boys") and of course the party apparatus, Rajiv won the election with a record margin of over 2, 27, 000 votes, which was 1, 00, 000 more than what Sanjay had secured.

"This gave him both confidence and legitimacy to play the part his mother undoubtedly had scripted for him after Sanjay's death. He turned almost all his attention now to the party. Beginning as a filter, as it were, between the massive and factious organisation and his mother, he gradually but most perceptibly started taking major decisions on his own.

"To enable him to do so more authoritatively he was appointed a general secretary of the party in February last year. Though one of several general secretaries, he obviously was more equal than the others. They realised this soon enough, and so did Congress (I) chief ministers and other leaders.

"He has begun with the great advantage of being Mrs. Gandhi's son. But as he himself said once, "The family only gets one an entry. If you expect to go further, you have to show you can do something."

There is a long and thorny road ahead of Rajiv Gandhi. He needs to tread warily and wisely. His constituency now is the whole country teeming with grave problems—and right now in grave peril. All sane and patriotic Indians look up to him for leadership, and earnestly hope he will rise to the occasion.

Born on 20 August, 1944, Mr. Gandhi spent his early childhood in the Prime Minister's house as the grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

After his early education at the St. Columbus School, Delhi, he went to Doon School in Dehradun. Later, he proceeded to the UK for higher studies.

Mr. T.N. Ninan, the noted journalist, has given a glimpse of the student life of our new Prime Minister in an article entitled "A Gentleman in Polities" published in *India Today*. According to him Rajiv Gandhi was a shy boy who sat 26 years ago at the dinner table in Doon School's Kashmir House, almost hiding from his visiting grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, at the senior table in the centre of the room. In class, he occupied a back bench. Outside it, he played the regulation games without distinction, occasionally broke bounds and stole forbidden leechis from the school trees, but generally kept out of harm's way. Younger brother Sanjay would break a friend's tennis racket because he undercut a market that Sanjay had set up for lime juice in the school, but Rajiv seemed neither enterprising nor destructive. He was liked, but not "popular", a well-behaved lad but not a sissy. In 1960, he just failed to become a prefect, and passed the Senior Cambridge examination in the second division. It didn't seem at that time this boy was meant to shape a country.

Soon he was at the Imperial College in London. After a year, he moved to Trinity College, Cambridge, for a course in mechanical engineering. "Didn't study at all, really," he said once in explanation of the continued lack of educational distinction. And at home in India, his mother fretted, writing letters which suggested that she expected Sanjay to take care of his older brother.

Money was tight in England: some £620 a year, of which £450 went in fees, and boarding and lodging expenses. There was not much left after that, so Rajiv sold ice cream, worked in a freeze factory, then in a bakery (where he seems to have won a prize for a record quantity of baking), and plucked fruit. But the one who got himself a car was Sanjay, who was doing a stint with Rolls Royce in Crewe.

Rajiv was good-looking and the girls were interested. But he dated them without conviction, accompanied male friends to pubs where he did not drink (he remains even today a man who is happiest with gallons of Cola), and debated what was wrong with India in the way that political university students do. But he stayed away from the leftist university union, remained unaffected by the Beatles wave, wondered how he would attend a dinner at the High Commissioner's place without a jacket (friends found him one that fitted), and went his mundane way, not flaunting his family connection, making few waves. At a party, he met Sonia Maino, who had come up from Italy to do a year's course in English. M.O. Mathai wrote tartly some years ago that this was the best thing that Rajiv did at Cambridge. Rajiv has said he thinks so too.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was a man who would have preferred to fly planes. Instead, destiny has decided to seat him in the political cockpit of the world's largest democracy, says Jugu Abraham.

Four years ago Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had openly expressed dislike for politicians who, he felt, were full of "wheeling and dealing and intrigue." Even his wife seemed to think so. In an interview, he admitted that Mrs. Sonia Gandhi "was dead against the idea of my getting into politics". Unlike his brother Sanjay, he was fighting shy of the Khadi cap.

The death of Sanjay seemed to twist his destiny. The successful Indian Airlines Avro commander who was trained to fly Boeings hung his pilot's cap when his younger brother died in a plane crash. The man who once admitted, "I don't know enough about politics" reluctantly got out of his jeans and into Khadi pyjamas nine months after he dithered and finally gave in to the "draft Mr. Rajiv Gandhi campaign." The change had come on the heels of a personal tragedy.

The die was cast when his mother approved the move. On the morning of May 11, 1981, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi paid a Rupee for the pink coloured receipt that made him a regular member of the Congress (I) party. The events followed. He filed his nomination papers for Amethi Parliamentary seat.

Rajiv Gandhi became a man of the masses when he started his electioneering for the 1981 bye-election to Lok Sabha. The constituency was Amethi from where Sanjay had contested and won the elections earlier. The polling day was June 14. Summer was at its peak. Yet Rajiv travelled the entire constituency of Amethi.

Amethi Parliamentary constituency consisted of 5 assembly segments and each such segment had been further divided into 12 to 15 sectors and each sector catered to about 15 to 20 polling booths. One polling booth had 800 to 1,000 votes and comprised a radius of approximately 2.5 kms. There were about 770 polling booths and Rajiv Gandhi had visited almost every part of the constituency, even those villages which were never visited by any incumbent before. It is a predominantly rural constituency. There are only about half a dozen small towns with a population of 10,000 or above.

His workers were the local people working and campaigning almost on their own in the innumerable villages.

Rajiv Gandhi has a bewitching smile, a winning smile...or better still, a Nehru smile.

He introduced a new style of electioneering, he tells : "I have come to meet you and know your problems...and I have come to make friendship with you..."

"This election you are contesting....It is yours...and the victory that will be...will be yours..."

His addresses were brief. He began all his addresses with "Mothers, sisters and brothers", *Matao, behno aur bhaiyo* and ended with *Jai Hind* which he said, was an old slogan and had perhaps not been spoken of for sometime.

In spite of the brevity, his speeches had a fresh aura about them every time he delivered them. He made no wild promises. He talked only of redeeming the promises which were already made and he vowed to fulfil them all.

He believes in getting the work done. But he asked for the participation of the people as well, for "the Government can provide water but cannot plough the fields; government can set up industries but cannot do their labour...work they have to...sweat they have to..." He told them if people participate in getting the work done, he won't be lacking.

He worked hard—15 to 18 hours a day and kept it up throughout. The printed schedules listed more than two dozen meetings in a day, apart from the numerous roadside stopovers and unscheduled meetings.

He stuck to his schedule. He kept his time and was never late.

He did not fumble for words. He was firm and precise. Rajiv Gandhi spoke in a clear, precise measured tone. "You should have no vague concerns, anybody can talk, anybody can break, working and making something is very hard..."

Rajiv Gandhi's audience was generally not very large. It ranged from 150 to 1500. There was not a formally decorated stage. Mostly the whole decoration consisted of some leaves and bunting hung here and there. A cloth sheet spread over a wooden plank was placed on an improvised raised platform. And sometimes he had to just stand on the ground itself and deliver his speech without any sound system. Stage or no stage he was the same calm, quiet and thoughtful Rajiv Gandhi.

A large number of petitioners thronged his stage very often. Their long petitions and their sentimentally illiterate narrations did not irritate him at all. His patience did not wear out. He sometimes had to spend more time with the petitioners than the time he spent in making his addresses—distributing thus the healing touch of an apothecary.

"Do not say Rajiv Gandhi...say Mahatma Rajiv Gandhi is contesting the election", said a villager and the campaigner introducing the candidate was baffled and surprised for the people knew more about him and his temperament than the campaigners did.

He seemed to be aware of their ethos, their customs, the temples and the mosques and knew their auspicious days when most of their marriages would take place.

Thanks to his personality, his love for people in less than a fortnight Rajiv Rattan Gandhi became 'Raju Bhaiya'. The interest he generated was intense, immense and immaculate.

On a number of times after the *Pradhan*, the headman of the village or some other local leader had said a few words of welcome, Rajiv Gandhi carried the mike of his sound

system to an elderly person asking him if he would like to say something.

According to Rajeev Mittal, author of *Rajiv Gandhi—The Theme Today* :

"This kind of respect and decency mellows all. Nobody has the feeling of being ignored and this kind of asking by Rajiv Gandhi is a matter of pride for the man, his ordinaryness which may be he has suffered all his life vanishes, he goes home a great man with a bit of history in his pocket".

The same author adds :

"Rajiv Gandhi is at home with them. He understands the meaning and importance of the common man in democracy. And thus they find a friend in him. Some of them approach him for matters which are hardly problems or grievances. And he has an ear and a whisper for all. He consoles. His informality is appreciated—his *churidar*, his Gandhi cap fill people with a nostalgia for Panditji, for Feroze Sabib ; his simplicity is adored, he would accept the offer of an eatable and a glass of water of course, and very unassumingly. Participating in a village marriage, visiting a temple or laying a *Chuddar* at a *Mazar* is not only electioneering but an attempt to really know his people in depth. Women apply *Roli Tilak* on his forehead and touch his feet. He thus kindles an interest that fascinates and baffles in its simplicity. And above all he is courteous. And being courteous is no easy job.

"His hands, handsome and friendly, have a promise and a warmth. His handshake is firm and wholesome. He has a touch, a gesture, a phrase to match every mood and every meeting. It is not so during the campaigning alone but even after the formal campaigning those who come to meet him do not go back without meeting him. 'He does get something ; it may be a simple smile', said a senior aide. And whichever way the aide may phrase it, it is a Rajiv Gandhi smile—unique in its sympathy, sobriety and thoughtfulness.

"He has a system in his working. He tells his workers and campaigners to be quiet and patient even in the face of any provocation from the opposition".

This is a style, a confidence, gentlemanliness—it is anything but politics tempered with decency and humility, a typical Rajiv Gandhi factor.

Rajiv Gandhi is full of love and affection for the people of Amethi.

The people of Amethi felt honoured last time since a Gandhi had contested from there. This time they will be doubly blessed because the Prime Minister of India is contesting from there.

Last time the love and affection of the people of Amethi was reflected in the victory margin of 2.37 lakhs votes. This time it is bound to be much higher.

After his victory in Amethi Rajiv Gandhi was breaking new ground in the world of politics. He was the brains behind the mammoth Kisan rally of January 1981 held in New Delhi. In this exercise, the Congress Party got a shot in the arm and the young politician had a taste of the labyrinthine power structure of Indian politics.

The next milestone on the road of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's short journey into the world of politics was the November 1983 AICC (I) meet at Calcutta where it was made amply clear that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was the force to be reckoned with. Other general secretaries vanished into the background. G.K. Moopanar and Shyam Sunder Mohapatra had to take a side seat. Other leaders like Kamlapati Tripathi were already known figure heads.

Soon after came the phase when Rajiv Gandhi chose party candidates for the Rajya Sabha elections in March '84.

But as in the tragic death of his brother Sanjay that resulted in his becoming a politician, another tragedy has propelled him to the honour of being the Prime Minister, clean and controversy-less.

To assess the personality of a man we have to know his mind. To know the mind we must try to fathom his knowledge, his views, his ideologies, his reactions, his presentations. And the best way of knowing all these is to interview a man. *Patriot* interviewed Rajiv Gandhi eight months before he became Prime Minister. To know Rajiv Gandhi the man we

can do no better than to reproduce the excerpts from that interview.

Mr. Gandhi does not use jargon, but he is clear in spelling out what he wants to communicate. "All progressive forces in the country must work together because therein lies the interest of the country and our people", he says.

Mr. Gandhi expressed these views in a wide-raging discussion with *Patriot*. During a 45-minute meeting, on the eve of the 77th plenary session of the Indian National Congress, he surveyed the international scene and discussed national challenges. He spoke of the Congress (I) strength as well as its shortcomings. He covered a wide gamut—from world peace to regionalism, from education to family planning.

He puts the concept of a national consensus proposed at the Bombay session of the AICC (I) in a balanced perspective and says, "It does not mean that Congress(I) should give up or retract from its policies and ideals. It also does not mean that other parties need retract from their ideals and policies. It envisages that all parties, which share a common perspective, should discuss basic issues with a view to evolving a commonality of approach. You maintain your respective positions, but agree on certain basic things for the country".

Mr. Gandhi spoke quietly and confidently. He did not parry any question, did not circumvent ticklish issues.

The following is the detailed account of the views expressed by Mr. Gandhi during the discussion.

Mr. Gandhi emphasised that "any vision of India must be seen in the global perspective". India has everything going for it to become a very prosperous economy, homogeneous society and a united nation with a feeling of brotherhood and harmony among different sections of its population. "But we have to pursue our goals in a given international environment. The world picture is not looking so good. It is not just what is happening, which is bad enough. But what causes concern is change in attitude towards global problems and contentious issues. Till recently, there was always an element of caution in international responses. This does not seem to be there now. The major powers, specially one major power, is much quicker to intervene and interfere in other countries. This is detri-

mental to peace and progress on our planet. We feel that much more resources, financial and otherwise, and energy must be diverted—using science—towards improving the lot of humanity”.

Every minute millions of dollars were spent on armament, Mr. Gandhi said. “It is a mind-boggling figure. You look at your watch, the dial ticks and millions are gone into armaments. This vast amount must somehow be channellised towards the uplift of society. There is no doubt that we must concentrate more on the poorer societies. But I feel it is better even if these resources are used for affluent societies than used for war, because use of these resources on armaments poses a danger and a very great danger to human survival”.

“In this global situation I think our major task is to convert more people to nonalignment and nonviolence,” Mr. Gandhi added.

“Both these are very positive philosophies and are major contributions of our senior leaders to present-day world. We are a little too close to the event now to be able to evaluate objectively the magnitude of this contribution. But I think in times to come mankind will realise how much these two factors can help and have helped to avert war and skirmishes on this earth”, he said. He pleaded that India must continue to work towards these ends and carry forward the legacy of its leaders.

In the context of intensifying the fight for peace and averting war, Mr. Gandhi emphasised the need for relying on the people’s strength. “If we are able to change the mood of the people—it is not just the mood of the leaders is important because with communication expansion and devolution of power down to much lower level all over the world the voice of the people does make a difference—it will have made a difference.”

It is necessary to bring home the message of peace to the masses, he added. He advocated the use of all forms of communication for this purpose. For example, he pointed out, the film ‘Gandhi’ had a tremendous impact because nobody—who had not seen Gandhi in action—could envisage that non-violence could be so powerful. The impression is that non-violence is a sort of pacifist, defeatist policy, which it is not. It is a very positive, aggressive policy, he underlined.

Dealing with internal tasks, Mr. Gandhi said, "Our major task is development". He felt that many of our ailments can only be cured by development. It is only when we get people occupied in constructive activities that their minds are absorbed in positive pursuits. Then they are not thinking of conflicts. So the real answer does not lie there."

Of course we are not going to be able to achieve the type of development that we would like immediately. It is going to take time", he added. "In that intervening period", Mr. Gandhi said, "we have to maintain national unity which is of prime importance today and we have to fight with the forces of imperialism and neocolonialism which are very visible today.

"Putting it briefly, we have two important tasks: working for development which must be the prime goal and a sort of holding on operation to keep the disruptive forces at bay till you achieve that level of development."

Discussion with Mr. Gandhi on the role of the Congress and the challenges facing the Indian polity was stimulating indeed. His replies revealed a remarkable perception about the interplay of historical forces. "We should be clear about what we in India are engaged in", he said. "I think the best word to use is experiment because after all what we in the Congress are doing in India is an experiment which has not been done anywhere in the world before. It is in so many ways a unique experiment. If you look at the type of development, we are trying to do, if you look at the political process we have adopted and pursued, if you look at the nature of our social programmes, if you look at our policy towards labour and the protection we are committed to give them, and so on, if you look at the total picture you can only describe it as a number of revolutions in which we are engaged at the same time.

"We are trying to do simultaneously what the rest of the world has done over a period of centuries not just a period of years, and they achieved it while their labour was totally oppressed and working and living in really terrible conditions," he pointed out.

"I do not think that anywhere in our country our labour is in that condition", he added. "Of course, this creates unique

problems for the accomplishment of our revolution because most of the earlier revolutions were based on exploitation. But we are determined to pursue our goals within the framework of values and ideals we cherish. We have got industrial scientific, technological and cultural revolutions going on at the same time, and all these are aimed at changing a static society. This is a most exciting and creative adventure in history.

"And now another turning point has arrived with the micro-electronics and computers. In the earlier revolutions whoever got left behind found it extremely difficult to catch up and (since this is another turning point) we must see that we are not left behind", he emphasised.

"While doing all at the same time we have also influenced the world opinion. We have emerged as Third World leader", he said.

Mr. Gandhi pointed out that while doing all these things we have found there are bound to be shortcomings in certain areas.

Asked to identify major shortcomings, Mr. Gandhi said: "If you ask me to identify one major shortcoming, I would say that the Congress has concentrated too much on development and not enough on politics."

Elaborating this theme, Mr. Gandhi pointed out that "every country needs something to hold its people together. Most countries in the world have something to bind them. It is either religion or language or a homogenous social structure within clearly defined natural borders. The socialist countries have the philosophy of communism which is a very strong binding force. We do not have anything like that. We are divided on the basis of language, we are divided on the basis of religion, we are divided on everything, religion, region, language. So to hold everybody united I think that only force in the country today is the Congress. And to discharge this historic responsibility effectively it has to be political in real sense."

Developing his concept of the political role and philosophy of the Congress, Mr. Gandhi paid glowing tributes to Nehru's vision. "I think Panditji's concept of how India should go

ahead was very very farsighted and but for his foresight we would have been like any other developing country today. We would have been subservient in some way to one of the major powers. It is because of that foresight and planning that we are today able to be in the position that we are."

"At the same time," he added, "I do feel that keeping his basic ideas and ideals intact we will have to re-programme some of periferal paths of that programme to match today's conditions—today's world conditions and conditions within the country, political and economic.

"For example, when Panditji started planning, the level of industrial development was almost zero. Our capability to build our industry was very slow. The technical talent available was very limited. Today all that has changed. Today it is a question of keeping those basic ideals intact and at the same time mobilising all the resources that this work has generated for us.

"To mobilise these resources—whether manpower resources, technical resources, industrial or agricultural resources—we must shift our priorities to match that. As I said, I have a strong feeling that we have not concentrated enough on the political aspect. This inhibits us from moving forward on that path creatively."

Another important shortcoming, Mr. Gandhi pointed out, lies in the areas of education of our youth. "We have not done well enough on that front. I don't want to and I am not competent to comment on the quality of specific educational institutions. But by and large we have not instituted a sense of values in the new generation. Values that we nourished during the freedom struggle and for which India is really known throughout the world. That is one major failure."

He was also dissatisfied with the performance in the field of population control. "Development is a two-sided weapon because as you progress your health improves so much. Now our life expectancy has gone up from somewhere 32-33 to little over 56 years which is in a way the indicator of all round progress. We have done very well there and that must reflect in the population figures. But we should have realised the implications and worked much harder on this front right from the beginning.

It took us many years before we turned our attention to the population question. So Congressmen really have to go out in these three areas", he said.

Education and political philosophy are really combined in many ways, he said. "If you look at other countries in the world, their basic political philosophy is built into the education system. We have not done likewise. Now being a secular and totally open society, all types of politics flourish in our country. I don't think we should build our philosophy into the education system. This is where our workers and our party can come in—by spreading the message and convincing people that this is the best way and, really, the only way for our country".

Mr. Gandhi discussed with some animation the call for a national consensus which was given at the Bombay session of the AICC(I). "Our concept of a national consensus should not make people feel that it means cutting into or going back from Congress policies. It should not also mean that any other party is required to go back from its policy. It means that all parties which basically have the interest of the country at their heart should agree to discuss certain basic issues, at that level because if we are not united on these issues then it will damage the country. A consensus does not mean that any political party goes back from its own policies. No, you maintain your position but we must come to a consensus on basic things for the country".

He was optimistic about forging such a consensus. "If we get down to it and though there is a lot of hot air blown around, on basic question I don't think there can be any difference because everybody knows what is right."

Discussing certain aspects of development strategy, Mr. Gandhi said, there was no dichotomy between industrial progress and rural development. "Even when we do have a programme to put up a steel mill ultimately that is for the rural people because there is nowhere else the steel can really go".

"There is sometimes an attempt to create a dichotomy between rural interests and urban interests. In fact there is none. There is no dichotomy when you look at the basic things. Of course, if you look at production of consumer items and the non-essential items then of course you start getting a different picture".

Giving his revaluation of various programmes designed for the poorer and deprived sections, Mr. Gandhi said, "You can look at the 20-point programme and the other governmental programmes as two sets of programmes. On one hand, programmes which are community oriented, I think by and large we are doing very well there. There are not many complaints in this regard. The second set consists of individual oriented programmes. This is where we are getting complaints. Some of these programmes are just not viable. For example, we give somebody a buffalo (I am taking a rough example and figures which can vary from area to area). If you subtract the best of feed, maintenance and the interest a poor villager has to pay along with instalments, is there anything left for him? In an area, where the output is high, he may earn enough but in some areas there is not enough for him. These programmes really have to be looked at closely".

Mr. Gandhi pointed out that it was also difficult for any government machinery to deal with individuals. "I think, in many cases, it is not a practical and viable exercise. But at the same time we must do it. It is not something that we can stop, because even if we waste some money, some people get benefit. It is like the whole method of scattering seeds in the air".

On helping individuals in the rural development programmes, he said, "we must concentrate on programmes which make each family unit a viable unit. We have today too many people trying to live off the land which cannot support so many. This overburden on fields must be reduced and this surplus manpower can be better employed elsewhere. I don't mean in towns and industrial areas, but in the rural areas itself in industries and other vocations. That is an area we should concentrate a little more".

"We also have to concentrate on improving our food output. We have got a very good patch in Haryana, Punjab, western UP, the Andhra coastal belt. Another very good area is the rest of UP and Bihar. It can be a gold mine. It is only a question of better utilisation of our water resources as introduction and popularisation of better methods and our people can do it. We have seen them do it. All that is needed is a

little education, a little incentive. I don't think there is anything that can hold our chaps back".

Mr. Gandhi expressed the view that "all the progressive forces in the country must work together". However this, according to him, does not mean liquidation of the Congress in any part of the country.

"I do feel that the Congress is the only really binding and strengthening force in the country today. It just might not be true 15 years from now. Then the basic proposition would change. But today the Congress is really the only force that can hold the country together and for that reason it is essential that the Congress is alive—I don't mean necessarily in government of course we prefer it—but we must not pack up, so to say, in any State and that means we have to fight in our own name (in all States). For example, in Tamil Nadu the only force that can counter regionalism is the Congress and the Congress must do it. We can't let things slip and let go by compromise".

Promilla Kalhan, the noted journalist, has given us a glimpse of the private side of our new Prime Minister. According to her :

"Rajiv Gandhi is a man of few words. Almost always there are pleasant words, particularly in private conversation. But he is a man with ideas of his own. He means to make them stick. The style of functioning of politicians may have to undergo a change. Rajiv does not appreciate *chamchagiri*. He does not think thousands of rupees should be wasted on lavish decorations to welcome him. As Mrs. Gandhi's body lay inside the porch of Teen Murti House last week quite a few politicians, some of them doddering and grey-haired, bent down to touch his feet. Others insisted on hugging him, among them were some ministers in Mrs. Gandhi's Government who had not, at that point, been reappointed. Such demonstration of sycophancy is not likely to touch him. Rajiv Gandhi would like to project a clean image, an image of efficiency and good performance. He is himself a technocrat. Politics, until the recent past, has not been his main concern. Aviation has been his profession but he is also deeply interested in electronics. The rationalisation of the electronics tax-structure is largely due to his efforts. Licencing policies are in for a

change. We will probably be getting away from controls. The ideas is to reduce the price of inputs but to liberalise the licensing policy thereby creating healthy competition. This will not only benefit the consumer but the Government also to the extent that it is a buyer.

"A certain amount of discipline is Rajiv Gandhi's hallmark. As a pilot he insisted on strictly adhering to norms. He did not stand for laxity. During the Emergency he tried, very consciously, not to use his position as the Prime Minister's son. Towards the end of the Emergency, it is known he was toying with the idea of shifting out of No. 1, Safdarjung Road, into a separate apartment. His friends know he was looking for one.

"He is essentially a reserved person and non-interfering. He believes in decentralisation, hand over jobs to people he trusts and then expects them to deliver the goods. He is less likely to tolerate slipshod work than did his mother. Mrs. Gandhi respected loyalty more than anything else. And "loyalists" sometimes gave her doctored information to serve their own ends. Rajiv is likely to have a wider network of information channels. He will depend on his Ministers. But he may also turn to experts for details. It is known that he believes in rewarding good work, but also in punitive action.

"Recently returning from a trip to Kerala he changed a plane at Bombay. Some people met him at the airport. Rajiv Gandhi carried two bags, one in each hand. A friend tried to relieve him of them. But he said : "I have two hands and two bags. If I had a third bag I would have requested you to carry it for me. But I can manage to carry two myself". A friend recalls that when Rajiv was a pilot he used to go and meet him at No. 1, Safdarjung Road, occasionally. They were at times both headed for the airport. But invariably Rajiv would send him off in a taxi, himself using the staff car. He did not wish to misuse the staff car".

Rajiv Gandhi has been the Prime Minister of India for barely a month. It is too early to attempt an assessment of the achievements and failures of the soft spoken, affable, mild-mannered pilot turned Prime Minister. Three noted journalists have tried to make an assessment of the working of Rajiv Gandhi since he became the Prime Minister. According to

Nikhil Chakravarty, Rajiv Gandhi is cautious but not faltering. Rajiv Gandhi's first fortnight after becoming Prime Minister of India, according to Chakravarty, "marked by several important decisions promptly taken—his taking over the stewardship of the Congress(I) in the footsteps of his mother, his first broadcast to the nation outlining the policy stand of his government, and then finally the announcement of the general election for the Lok Sabha in six weeks, that is, on December 24.

"A new Prime Minister can never possibly be a copy of his predecessor. To expect only continuity but no change is, to say the least, both unreal and irrational. This holds good in the case of Rajiv Gandhi taking his first steps as Prime Minister—cautious but not faltering. Watching him those who miss the mercurial touch of Indira Gandhi would do well to recall that in the first phase of her Prime Ministership she was halting and dithering both in action and articulation. Secondly, the situation today in the country, pregnant with uncertainties accentuated by the death of Indira Gandhi and the manner of it, is in the danger of totally going out of control if the person at the helm of the government were rash or aggressive. In this respect, there need be no hesitation in conceding that the country is fortunate that Rajiv and not his late brother is the chief executive today.

"It was almost inevitable that Rajiv Gandhi should be made the president of the party since the style was set by his mother and it would not have been possible to reverse that precedent immediately after her demise. During the last five years, Indira Gandhi had run the party and her government revolving round a single personality that was herself. This was done mainly for two reasons : first, to shortcut the problem of setting the norms of relationship between the party and the government which had baffled the Congress leadership for nearly four decades, secondly, to eliminate the possibility of a rival power centre emerging within the party.

"At the same time, this total identification of the party leadership with government leadership has its hazards under the conditions prevailing in our country : it undermines the standing of the party which is supposed to be the political authority to organise and lead mass movement for the effective

implementation of many of the decisions of the government relating to the life and living of the people. It would be futile to expect that Rajiv Gandhi could have straightaway made a clean break from his mother's style of functioning. Particularly in the season of massive electioneering campaign, the head of the government needs to exercise the fullest *command* over the party machinery. What is to be expected from this arrangement is that Rajiv Gandhi will have to be the main election campaigner of the Congress (I) all over the country. Even if he does not claim to command the mass allegiance that his mother came to muster, the fact that her mantle rests on his shoulders is calculated to invest him with the authority that he is yet to earn on his own.

"Rajiv Gandhi's broadcast presenting the new government's policy statement has been widely welcomed. It was but natural that the statement should have been the product of prolonged discussions in the South Block and has the stamp of the draftsmanship of Indira Gandhi. Clearly, it reflects adherence to the cardinal points in the tested policies initiated by Nehru and carried forward by Indira Gandhi. From the reiteration of the important role of the public sector to that of the main features of Indira's foreign policy, it is undoubtedly a noteworthy document particularly when one notices that there is no dearth of wise men in the establishment whose outlook and orientation fit in with the ideology of the Janata Raj.

"This statement by the new Prime Minister will certainly go a long way towards reassuring the public that at least on the formal plane, Rajiv Gandhi is committed to follow the time-tested course chalked out by Nehru and Indira Gandhi. This will no doubt help the Congress (I) in the coming general elections as this statement cannot but be regarded as the Party's election platform.

"The announcement of early elections was expected under Indira Gandhi. What Rajiv Gandhi has done is to advance it by about a fortnight. This is not in the least surprising because the Congress assessment—as borne out by the discussions in the working committee which elected Rajiv Gandhi as the party president—is that the wind is at present very favourable for the Congress (I) because of the spontaneous welling up

sympathy for it after the brutal killing of Indira Gandhi and nobody can make better use of it than her son. At the same time, the Congressmen bereft of the benefit of Indira's campaigning, would be in a mood to bury their factional hatchers. A sense of urgency to cash in on public sympathy is perceptible in the Congress (I) camp."

B.N. Uniyal, a noted, journalist has tried to assess the performance of Rajiv Gandhi. In the very beginning he agrees that now it is admittedly grossly unfair to seek to judge Mr. Gandhi by his performance within so short a time of his assuming office. However, judge one must for the election is just about a month ahead and, for however short a time he might have been in the office, he is bound to figure at the centre of the coming campaign. Well, then, how does one judge or measure a Prime Minister in office for so short a time? One can, at best, attempt to discern the first signs he has made and analyse these to ascertain the possible course of policies, both domestic and foreign.

And the first signs which he has made clearly show that he is now here not just to play a role which history has all of a sudden thrust upon him but really to do a job which he has taken up in right earnest from the very day of his coming to office. That he has impressed his television audience and all those who have had occasion to come in his close contact in the last some days, does not need to be stressed. He has shown himself to be astute without being artful; simple and spontaneous without necessarily being naive; and serious without wearing a sombre look on his face on or off stage. These are all traits which make a politician popular with the people and a success at all hustings.

As in his own case, he has indicated that in case of the others too mere role-playing will not be enough and the whole approach will need to be restructured to make it goal-orientated. The country has reached a level of socio-economic development where further growth cannot be achieved until and unless we break through the present barriers set by procedures which give-eminence and protection to role-playing. He has promised to bring about this reorientation and to those, at least, who are

not totally blinded by their prejudices. He does sound serious, even convincing, about what he is promising.

One can say that in most, if not all, matters domestic and foreign, he has merely reaffirmed adherence to the basic policies, programmes and attitudes well-known from the days of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. And this is, no doubt, true. Much of what he has said or done in the last some days is a continuation of the policies of the days of his mother. There are, no doubt, some subtle and significant difference in emphasis as in his special stress on developing a new goal-oriented work ethic, on efficiency and integrity, on performance instead of on procedures, and on making the more effluent contribute in a larger and more real measure to the uplift of the less better-off and the poor. What is, however, new is the fresh vigour which he is instilling into the whole business of working the Government machinery to achieve these objectives, a vigour one felt to be somewhat lacking during Indira Gandhi's last years.

The same vigour is reflected in his first few initiatives on the foreign policy front, where he has come out with a strong and what in diplomatic parlance would be called a correct response to the Pakistani manoeuvres in regard to the exploitation of the extremists in Punjab. A much bolder initiative has come on Nicaragua. It is no doubt in continuation of India's approach both within its own foreign policy framework and its chairmanship of the NAM, but it is bold nevertheless inasmuch as it has clearly shown that young and new to the big tasks as Mr. Gandhi may be, he is not lacking in taking timely initiatives in such matters even if they cause annoyance to a big power.

Again, his warm references to the Soviet Union in his policy statement as a country with which India has had "wide-ranging and time-tested relationship based upon mutual cooperation, friendship and vital support when most needed" might have again been a continuation of the policy of the past governments, but it must be contrasted with the US in the very next paragraph of his address in which the nature of bare economic and trade relations was phrased with extreme clarity.

All this has not much impressed the Opposition parties. Two Communist parties have, no doubt, welcomed the reiteration of the basic principles of the foreign policy, taking note of the warm references to friendship with the Soviet Union, but that is about all. As for Mr. Gandhi's observations on various domestic issues they have not found much in these to welcome or appreciate, for they believe that his views are merely a continuation and reiteration of the policies of Mrs. Indira Gandhi whose removal from the scene in their opinion has not changed the character of the Congress (I).

In this context, Mr. C. Rajeswara Rao's remark was interesting. "In normal circumstances", he is said to have told newsmen at a Press Conference, "he (Mr. Gandhi) should have been given a chance to prove his merits, but as the election was already there, he would have to be fought and opposed."

Mr. Rao, like Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, was obviously, not ready to be even as much considerate, if not charitable, as Mr. Morarji Desai who is reported to have said that Mr. Gandhi looked a young man of promise and wished him success in his tasks. As for the other Opposition parties, they have all, with some minor differences of emphasis and nuances, expressed their clear resolve to oppose him not for what he is or promises to be or to do, but because he is Indira Gandhi's son who, in their opinion, should never have been elected to the office he now holds, Mr. Uniyal adds.

N.C. Menon, editor of the *Hindustan Times*, a leading daily, has brilliantly summed up the assessment of the new Prime Minister. In his article entitled "26 Days of Rajiv Gandhi" he writes :

"Why 26 days ? Well, why not ?

"It is the custom in the United States for political pundits, columnists and newspapers to devote a lot of time and effort to an assessment of the first hundred days of a newly-elected President. His actions, attitudes and demeanour, indeed his approach to the variegated tasks of the Presidency, are sought to be analysed to ascertain how he has performed, and to derive conclusions about how he is likely to shape up during the rest of his term.

"There is, of course, nothing magical or sacrosanct about the number 100, except perhaps that it is a nice round one. An assessment of a new incumbent can be made at any stage. Rajiv Gandhi, for instance, has practically been pitchforked into Prime Ministership by a sudden and tragic quirk of fate. He has had to adjust to the new situation literally at a moment's notice, taking on the governance of a large and diverse nation even while struggling with personal grief. Considering the intense trauma inherent in the situation, an assessment of even the few short days he has been in power should be indicative of the shape of things to come. Here then are the first 26 days of Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

"It is well known that Rajiv Gandhi asked the Chief Ministers and other functionaries who had rushed to the Capital following Indira Gandhi's assassination to return to their respective States to control the situation there. It is no secret that after the first day's Delhi riots, he toured the affected areas against the advice of security officials ; it is also known that he promptly got rid of the Capital's top officials who were found wanting at the hour of crisis. These actions, and the attitude of firmness behind them, found wide appreciation among leaders and laity alike.

"There were, however, other decisions, less-known but harder to take. The manner in which the new Prime Minister came through that test augurs well for the nation.

"Rajiv Gandhi was in West Bengal when the assassins struck. He rushed back and was told of the unanimous decision of the party to choose him to head the government. He was sworn in the same evening and had to take immediate charge of a nation aflame. He had, in addition, to meet various foreign dignitaries and Heads of State who began flying in for the funeral. He had to stay for hours near his mother's body to greet ceremonial visitors and go through various religious rituals. All these must have been physically and emotionally exhausting in the extreme.

"So powerful was the charisma and personality of Indira Gandhi that many of those who had been close to her, including seasoned, supposedly unflappable senior bureaucrats, wept unashamedly at her death. Rajiv Gandhi's grief must

have been deeper and a lot more poignant. And yet, he revealed unsuspected reservoirs of fortitude. He displayed grit and courage of the highest order. With the entire nation—and indeed the world—watching him, he knew he could not afford to break down and kept his emotions under commendable control.

"In the midst of coping with tragedy, an extremely tight schedule, and controlling the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination, Rajiv Gandhi took three crucial decisions during the first 72 hours of his Prime Ministership. The decisions were entirely his own because, as President Truman once said, "the buck stops here."

"The first was the decision to call out the army when the situation began to get out of control by the late evening of October 31. The second, and a more difficult decision was to issue shoot-at-sight orders. But the firm resolve to clamp down on violence, so plainly evident in the two decisions, did play a considerable role in taming down violence in the seven States most affected.

"Rajiv Gandhi's third decision was even more dramatic. When it was discovered that relief measures for the victims of violence in the capital were inadequate, the new Prime Minister called in his Principal Secretary, Dr. P.C. Alexander, and the Cabinet Secretary, Krishnaswamy Rao Sahib, at 3 p.m. on November 2 and asked them to use all the resources of the Central Government to organise relief and give him a progress report at 9 p.m.

"Within those six hours, the two top officials fully utilised their immense bureaucratic clout to undertake an astonishing operation. They procured and despatched to the camps 10,000 litres of milk from the Delhi Milk Scheme, 10,000 loaves of bread from Modern Bakery, and 15,000 blankets from the Army. Twenty doctors and 100 nurses were selected and put to work in the camps.

"There has, incidentally, been considerable criticism of the Delhi Administration for inadequacies in the relief camps. It is, however, not altogether fair to blame the Administration for not being able to handle the relief problem. It was just too much and too sudden. The administration had to handle

simultaneously the fire-fighting operation of containing the conflagration of violence and destruction and looking after relief. The priority naturally went to the fire-fighting and relief suffered.

"How will Rajiv Gandhi shape up ? He has not taken a single false step or spoken a single wrong word in twentysix days of holding hectic office. That in itself is not an inconsiderable achievement. But more to the point is how he will handle the Prime Ministership after the din and bustle of the forthcoming electoral battle, which he and his party have every chance of winning. And there are clear pointers to the shape of things to come.

"During a press conference last week after filing his nomination papers for the Amethy constituency, the new Prime Minister asserted that the prime need of the country was a smoother and cleaner administration. In fact, he is absolutely sincere in his constant stress on clean politics. But being a principled but prudent pragmatist, Rajiv Gandhi would not want to rock the party boat until after the elections. Once he is armed with a mandate from the people, he is certain to subject the party and the government to an exercise in discipline the like of which has not been seen for a long time. In fact, the not-so-faint contours of the cleansing operation are already visible in the denial of party tickets to some sitting members of Parliament from Delhi and Maharashtra.

"As far as the administration is concerned, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is determined to modernise it. He has plans to use computers, word processors, photo copiers, as well as better and faster methods of correspondence in order to cut down on delays due to entrenched governmental lethargy. These will certainly help; but they constitute only the outer visage of efficiency. The Prime Minister is determined to improve the quality of administration, particularly its interface with the people.

"Rajiv Gandhi has also wisely decided to remove the ruinous divide between 'new comers' and 'loyalists' in the party. Many of those who have 'come back home' have been given a full say in selecting party candidates. Besides K.C. Pant, one of the senior leaders to return to the fold, has been

selected to contest from the prestigious New Delhi constituency.

"It is equally certain that Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministership will be a more relaxed and liberal one. There was the instance of a foreign photographer's films of the Delhi riots being seized by the Customs at Palam airport. Since no one wanted to take decision the matter travelled all the way up to the Prime Minister. His verdict was prompt: Let it go. Apart from a basic dislike for censorship, Rajiv Gandhi also realised that confiscating the film would give it the added glamour of a banned item and only ensure better and bigger display for another print certain to be smuggled out.

Rajiv Gandhi's democratic credentials were also proved in the matter of dissolving the Andhra Pradesh Assembly. He was told that according to expert legal opinion, the Governor was not bound by the advice of the Chief Minister since N.T. Rama Rao could not muster a majority on his own, without the help of other Opposition parties. In other words, President's Rule would have been constitutionally legal. But Rajiv Gandhi did not want to step into that legislative quicksands and, in the bargain, offered the Opposition a new campaign issue. 'If Mr. Rama Rao wants an Assembly election', he is reported to have said 'let him have it. It is for him to face the consequences, good or bad.'

"There was, incidentally, quite a lot of malicious comment at Rajiv Gandhi's alleged dependence on what his detractors chose to call the Triumvirate—Arun Nehru, Arun Singh, and M.L. Fotedar. But the criticism about coterie rule is without foundation. When his mother's life was so tragically cut short and he had to assume charge with such suddenness, it was understandable that Rajiv Gandhi would wish to have around him persons he knew and could trust. But he quickly became aware that his team of advisers might be accused of exercising extra-constitutional authority, and hastened to legitimize their association with him by appointing them to specific posts. Each man's sphere of activity is clearly defined and it has been ensured that there will be no party or political interference in or control over the functioning of government at that level.

"The new Prime Minister starts with an advantage. When Indira Gandhi came back to power in 1980, the economy was

in terrible shape, foreign exchange reserves were low, and India's international prestige was nothing to write home about. But Rajiv Gandhi has inherited what Indira Gandhi left behind: an economy on the upswing, a stable polity, global stature for India, and a good infrastructure. He now has to build it, a process that will be expedited by his penchant for modernity and the use of advanced technology.

"In sum, if the rest of Rajiv Gandhi's Prime Ministerial term is anything like his first 26 days, there will be no cloud on the horizon and the nation can look forward to a period of clean government and accelerated growth."

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has proved himself to be a man of courage by refusing Lok Sabha tickets to the former Maharashtra Chief Minister, Mr. A.R. Antulay, and the Karnataka MP, Mr. K. Lakkappa.

Both Mr. Antulay and Mr. Lakkappa have charges of corruption against them in their respective states. Rajiv Gandhi is learnt to have made it clear to the Central Parliamentary Board (CPB) that he would not favour recommendations for corrupt party workers.

Antulay's threat to split the Congress and to form a Congress of Indira loyalists had no effect on Rajiv Gandhi. By refusing tickets to corrupt candidates he has proved that he means to cleanse the Congress and the government. There has been no attempt by Rajiv Gandhi to push in his own men, and for most seats the consensus of the Pradesh election committee members, the CPB members and finally the sub-committee members has been taken.

CPB members said, "At no stage did the Prime Minister try to steam roll his own candidates but gave a patient hearing to all sides."

In a bid to provide a clean image to the party in the coming Lok Sabha election, Rajiv Gandhi has replaced one fourth of its sitting members considered by the Parliamentary Board as having "bad record."

Of 339 sitting members in the outgoing House, the CPB has denied renomination to over 80 in 17 States and eight Union Territories.

As the book goes to the press the Congress Party is gearing itself up for the election campaign. Under the new leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, the cards appear to be stacked in favour of it and it may once again walk home with a comfortable majority.

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